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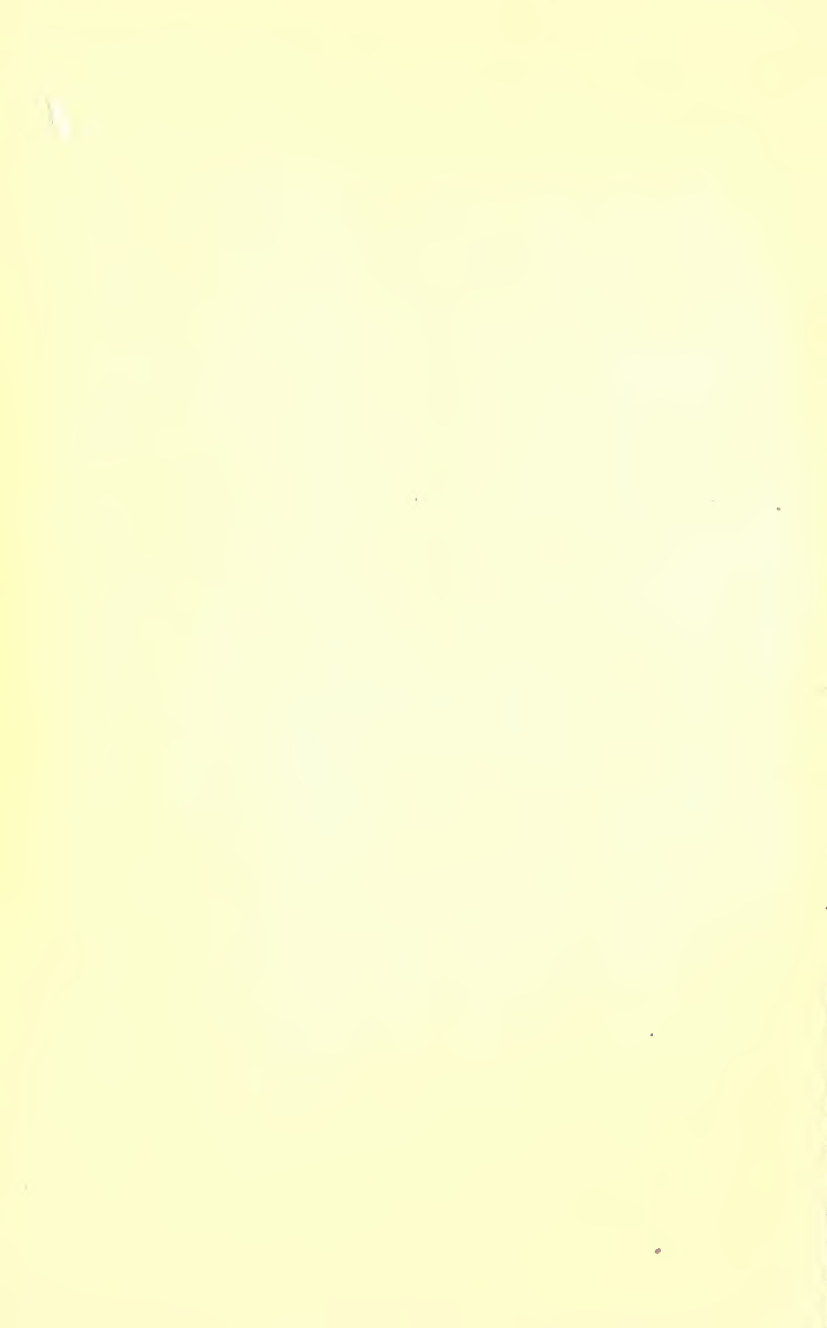




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# A HUMAN DOCUMENT'

VOL. I.



# A HUMAN DOCUMENT

A Nobel

BY

W. H. MALLOCK

*IN THREE VOLUMES*

: VOL. I.

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# A HUMAN DOCUMENT.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE following work, though it has the form of a novel, yet for certain singular reasons hardly deserves the name.

I happened to be staying at a country house on the Continent a year or so after the publication of a now celebrated book. That book was the *Journal of Marie Bashkirtcheff*; and as several of the party then present were reading it, it was not unnatural that it should be continually discussed and alluded to. There was one lady, however—a Countess Z——, a Hungarian—whose interest in it

struck me as being keener than on ordinary grounds could be accounted for; and whilst sitting with her on a pleasant afternoon in a pavilion by the side of a lake, and talking idly of any triviality that suggested itself, she recurred to the subject so abruptly and with such an air of abstraction, that I felt convinced it was constantly occupying her mind. Her remark was not very striking, and it required no particular answer, so by way of showing her that I was civil enough to be attending, I gave expression to a thought which had often before occurred to me.

“What a pity,” I said, “that a woman like Marie Bashkirtcheff, with such resolute frankness, and such power of self-observation, should have died before her experiences were better worth observing. She often tells us herself that she has nothing in her life to hide. A woman who can say that has not much to reveal. It does not mean merely that she has not lived badly—it means also that she has not lived at all.”

My companion fixed her eyes on me with an odd look of inquiry.

"Do you remember this?" I went on. "There is one thing and one thing only which Marie Bashkirtcheff seems to wince at recording; and that thing, she exclaims passionately, sullied her whole life. Do you remember what it was? It was a single kiss on the forehead which she gave to an uninteresting boy. A woman who can think herself sullied by a childish trifle like that knows no more of life than a man can know of partridge-shooting who feels disgraced as a sportsman by a splash of mud on his shoe.

"Tell me," said the countess with a slight access of irony, "how deep in the mud must a woman walk before a man considers her progress interesting?"

"He doesn't want her," I said, "to walk in the mud at all. When you ask that question you are running away with a word. What he wants her to experience is not the dirt of life, but the depths. The woman we are

speaking of had only paddled in the shallows, and she thought herself drowning when a ripple broke over her ankles. I confess I am irritated by this super-sensitive delicacy ; and yet, after all, it is that very quality which, if she had ever really lived, would have made her Journal such a revelation. I wish," I went on, as my thoughts more or less ran away with me, "I wish that this woman, with all her moral daintiness, had been swept off her feet by some real and serious passion. I wish that with soul and body she had gone through the storm and fire : that what she had once despised and dreaded had become the desire of her heart ; and that she had found herself rejecting, like pieces of idle pedantry, the principles on which once she prided herself as being part of her nature. What an astonishment and what an instruction she would have been to herself during the process ! Think how she would have felt each part of it—the degradation, the exaltation, the new weakness, the new strength, the bewilderment, the transfiguration ! Could she only have known all



this, and have written it down honestly, she then would have given us a human document indeed."

Countess Z—— remained silent for a moment or two. At last she said, "I am thinking over a practical matter. I possess a certain something, and I am thinking whether I will show it to you. Tell me," she went on with a laugh, "do you think you would care to see it?"

To this riddle only one answer was possible. "Anything which you think worth showing me I am sure I shall think worth seeing."

"Ah," she replied, "but you will have to do more than see it. This is something which you will have to pore and puzzle over, and if you don't take enough trouble about it to thoroughly try your temper, I shall discover how apathetic you have been, and consider you have abused my confidence. You are perhaps prepared to hear that what I speak about is a collection of manuscripts."

"Are they yours?" I asked.

“Only,” she said, “in the sense that they are my property. They were left me by the writer, who died a few months ago. She was a beautiful woman, and you know something about her ; but not much, or I can’t tell what would have happened to you.”

“Go on,” I said; “this is indeed interesting.”

“If you really meant,” she replied, “what you were just now saying, it ought to be far more interesting to you, than you have the least reason to suppose. Shall I tell you what the manuscript is? It is an imaginary continuation of Marie Bashkirtcheff’s Journal, in which she is represented as undergoing the exact fate you were wishing for her. I suspect, too,” she continued, “that it is something more than that. Indeed, I am certain that it is; but you must read it first, and I will talk it over with you afterwards. If you care to have it, it shall be sent to your room to-night.”

Countess Z—— was as good as her word. I was tempted for a moment to think she was even better, when, on going up-stairs to bed,

I saw lying on my table, not what I had pictured to myself—a small unpretending packet, which I could have held in my hand, and put with my pocket-handkerchief under my pillow, but a great folio volume bound like a photographic scrap-book, the sight of which filled me with dismay. When, however, I opened it, I was at once reassured and puzzled. It was a scrap-book in reality, not in appearance only; and its bulk was explained by the fact that its leaves were of thick cartridge-paper, and that the manuscript, whose sheets varied in size and appearance, had been pasted on to these, with a liberal allowance of margin. I realized presently the reason of such an arrangement. The Imaginary Journal, as Countess Z—— had called it, was not entirely a journal, and was not entirely imaginary. I could see, it is true, that some single thread of narrative, in a feminine handwriting, ran through the whole volume; but this was broken by pages after pages of letters, by scraps of poetry, and various other documents, all in the handwriting of a man,

and all—as it seemed—originals. “These,” I said to myself, “are fragments of actual life:” and a glance which I took at a few scattered passages was enough to convince me that such was indeed the case. There was no mistaking the matter; for one or two of the letters bore traces of post-marks, which had indented them through their envelopes. My curiosity was so completely roused that I turned to the narrative, which I concluded would explain the whole. I began at the beginning; it was striking eleven when I did so; and I did not close the volume till nearly four in the morning, by which time I had read it through to the end.

It was a singular record, not only on account of its contents, but of the manner in which it seemed to have been composed. The greater part of the narrative was just what I had been led to expect—an imaginary Journal of Marie Bashkirtcheff, during an imaginary continuation of her life. This was written in French; and there was an obvious effort, at first, at reproducing the tone and manner of the

original. It was an effort, however, which was not very successful; and the authoress soon abandoned it, or rather forgot to make it. As she did so, she became more and more interesting; until gradually, instead of reading the literary exercise of an amateur, I seemed to be listening to the voice of a living woman who was confessing to me. The very defects of her style, which, though generally clear and straightforward, yet often broke down with a sort of pathetic helplessness, contributed to this illusion. I felt each time this happened, that a woman's eyes were looking at me, and that her lips, as she spoke, had a deprecating smile on them, or that they trembled. Had she written far better the effect would have been far less vivid. To a critic, no doubt, her triumph would not have seemed a very legitimate one: but I found as I read on, that it became even more complete. The deeper the emotions she had to express, the more crude and fragmentary was the form in which she attempted to express them; and the result was that her baffled and crippled sentences,

her abrupt transitions, and odd lapses of grammar, though they could hardly be said to constitute a good description of what she professed to have felt, seemed to be more than that:—they seemed to be a visible witness of its reality, as if her language had been broken by it, like a forest broken by a storm, or as if it were some living tissue, wounded and quivering with sensation.

But there were further peculiarities about the narrative, besides those of style. Beginning as it did in the form of a journal, and maintaining for the most part this form throughout, it suddenly assumed at intervals that of an ordinary novel. The writer herself was spoken of in the third person; scenes were described at which she was not present; and the unspoken thoughts of a certain man were set forth by her as if he were avowedly a character of her own creation. When I first came upon a passage of this sort its effect naturally was to dispel the impression which had been growing on me, that the imaginary Journal was imaginary in name only. The



whole thing at once seemed to be artificial, and instead of interesting fact, to be very childish fiction. Before long, however, I began to make discoveries, by which my original impression was not only restored, but strengthened. I have said that the woman's narrative was broken in many places by the insertion of various documents, evidently written by a man. The first of these was a letter which the imaginary Marie Bashkirtcheff was made to say in her Journal she had received from a particular person. The sentiments expressed, and the events alluded to in it, all fitted completely the situation that had been described by her; but there was one discrepancy—every proper name was different. According to the Journal the letter came from St. Petersburg; in reality, it bore the address of a well-known club in Vienna. According to the Journal, the writer was a Russian; quite another story was betrayed by his clear signature: and all the subsequent documents by the same hand, whether they were letters, or verses, or, as some of them were, mere nondescript frag-

ments, bore to the woman's narrative a relation substantially similar. This, however, is not the whole of the matter. One of the fragments I have mentioned seemed, as I read it, to be familiar to me; and I asked myself where I could have come across anything like it before. In a moment I recollected. It was in that very volume; it was in one of those parts of the narrative which were written in the form of a novel. The passage I am referring to described the thoughts of a man as he sat dejected and solitary, looking at a woman's photograph; and I had been surprised at the insight it displayed into the mysteries of the male heart. I now saw that the whole was taken almost literally from a confession which had been made by the very man himself who was in question. Nor did this case stand alone. I continually came afterwards on others of the same kind. Descriptions, conversations, verses, philosophical and literary reflections, and pieces of self-analysis—things like these which occurred in the writings of the man had, I discovered, been



incorporated into the writings of the woman, she having changed hardly anything but the names. This change she had carried out consistently.

It may well be imagined that, after only one reading of it, a volume compiled so strangely left me in considerable perplexity ; and for half the night I lay considering what was the explanation of it. But the following morning I went through it more carefully ; and when, later in the day, I again met Countess Z——, I had come, as I was able to tell her, to a definite conclusion about part of it. So far as it related to the man, the story revealed in it was a true one ; that man's life, for some reason or other, had had a special interest for the woman who wrote the Journal ; by some means or other she had possessed herself of many of its secrets ; and she had conceived the idea of at once describing and hiding it in what, with a reader, should pass for a work of fiction. Farther, she had wavered in her mind as to the form which this work should take—whether it

should be that of a fictitious journal or of a novel: for it was evident now to me that the contents of the volume as they stood were merely a rough and experimental copy, interspersed with raw materials, of which as yet she had used part only.

“So much,” I said to Countess Z——, “must be plain to any one. That, however, is only one half of the question, and as to the other half, I am altogether in doubt. The man’s story is true, but then there is the story of the woman. Is that true also? Or was it merely constructed by the authoress in order to suit the dramatic requirements of the other? I have sometimes inclined to the first view, sometimes to the second. There are certain scenes and feelings described by her in a way in which a woman could not have described them—I constantly said this—if they had not been part of her own actual life; and yet, on the other hand, I constantly said also, would any woman, if they had been, have had the courage to describe them? There is another supposition which once or twice

occurred to me, and that is, that though her whole story is true, it is the story not of the authoress but of some other woman, who had revealed it to her. I thought, you see, that though she might have shrunk from describing herself, she might yet have had nerve enough for a *post-mortem* examination of a sister."

"Your supposition is wrong," said Countess Z—— quietly. "It is her own story. She has changed, as you have observed, the names of places and people; and also a number of other accidental circumstances: but so far as essentials are concerned, she has, to the best of my belief, not written a word that is not absolutely true. In that volume you have her life, and the life of another, turned literally inside out."

"And do you mean to tell me," I exclaimed, "that a woman of position and reputation, a woman too so sensitive as she must have been, and in some ways so extraordinarily innocent, really proposed to publish such a confession about herself, with such a mere pretence of a

veil thrown over her own identity? There are things in that Journal which the most callous woman would hide."

"There is nothing in that Journal," said Countess Z——, "which a callous woman could feel; and it is the sensitive women, and not the callous ones, for whom confession is sometimes a necessity. The veil, however, which you think so transparent, would really have been thick enough for every practical purpose. This hidden drama of which you have just seen the record, was unsuspected by any one during the life-time of the two chief actors. It is not likely to be suspected, now that they both are dead. The very people who knew them whilst it was in progress, and indeed took unconscious parts in it, would never, from any account of it, be likely to connect it with them, unless persons and localities were mentioned by their actual names: so the changes made by the authoress, slight as you may think them, would have been more than sufficient, supposing her book had been published, to have preserved her secret

from even her own acquaintance. And now," Countess Z—— continued, "I will ask your opinion about this. I have several times wondered during the last few weeks whether some one might not be found who could take the volume in hand and do for my poor friend what she had herself intended to do with it—work up its contents into some presentable form, and publish it. Do you think that a book like that would be found generally interesting?"

"That would depend largely," I said, "on how it happened to be written. The whole of the materials would have to be recast; for as they stand they are not a story in any literary sense; though they enable us, or rather force us, to construct one out of them for ourselves. But supposing that the story in question were to be told in an adequate way—and by this I mean only one very simple thing: I mean in such a way as to impress the reader with the truth of it—no novel that I have read for years would for me personally have half so much meaning or interest."

“I have thought,” said Countess Z——, “of writing to our Hungarian novelist J—— and asking him to look at the manuscripts, and see if he could make anything out of them: but I have now got a new project, and you must tell me honestly what you think of it; for it is to make that proposal not to him, but to you. There are several reasons,” she continued, “why, if you care to undertake it, you would be specially suited to the task. The characters, as you have seen, have a certain connection with England; and an Englishman would understand them far better than a Hungarian. There is one reason: here is another. You know Hungary, or at least certain parts of it; and it so happens that some of the places where you stayed are the very places in which some of the incidents of the story happened. But now I am coming to a better reason still. Do you remember that, when you were staying at Schloss S——, you made an expedition to Count D——’s villa, at N——, a house on the slope of a hill, just under a ruined castle?”



"How," I exclaimed, "could you possibly know that? For it was not—I am certain—one of the things I told you about."

"No," she said, "but Countess D—— is my sister. I often stay there; and a little white boudoir, into which I know you went, opening out of the hall, is my own room. You needn't stare at me as if you thought I was a witch. My sister and I arrived there the day after your visit. I heard of you from the housekeeper; and in particular I heard this. Of all the pictures—and they are many of them supposed to be interesting—you would look at none but three miniatures in my boudoir—three miniatures in a case, all of the same woman. You couldn't be got away from them."

"This is perfectly true," I said, "I see them distinctly still. The woman had a dress of a different colour in each. There was a brown dress, a purple dress, and a red one with white spots on it. And what did her face mean? Was it guilt, or innocence, or passion, or aspiration? It was a sort of chameleon, and

it meant them all by turns. That, at least, is what I thought afterwards. I only felt at the time as if there were some philtre in the ivory."

"That," said Countess Z——, "is the woman who wrote the Journal. It is her life and soul that I am now preparing to commit to you. Ah," she exclaimed, "I have touched you, I see, at last. Do you consent? Will you refuse what I ask you? Come," she went on, "bring down the book into the library. We shall not be disturbed there, and we will look it over together."

I brought it. She turned to something which I had not before noticed—a pocket inside one of the covers, and she extracted from it a piece of thin note-paper. "Look at this," she said. "You have probably not seen it. It is the dedication which the authoress meant to have prefixed to her book; and it will show you how completely you will be fulfilling her wishes if you will only write and publish that book as her proxy."



What she held out to me was merely a few lines. I recognized the hand with which the perusal had made me familiar; but, to my surprise, what I now saw was written not in French but in English, and not in the English of a foreigner. The Countess had called it a "Dedication": the writer herself had given it a different title, which was "Consecration." Then came some words, well known to an English reader, but seeming strange when appropriated here: "To the sole and only begetter of this volume." And then came what follows: "You by whose side I shall lie, in a wicker coffin like yours, with whose bones my bones shall mingle, and whose flesh I shall meet again in the sap of the violets above our grave, I have done my best, whilst waiting to come back to you in death, to perpetuate in this book neither your life nor mine, but that one single life into which both our lives were fused. Were my power as a writer equal to my love as a woman, that life should live in these pages, as it lived and breathed once in our now lonely bodies. I would make it

live—all of it; I would keep back nothing; for perfect love casts out shame. But if any one should think that I ought to blush for what I have written, I should be proud if, in witness of my love for you, every page of it were as crimson as a rose.”

When I had finished reading this I found my companion looking at me with an expression of triumph at the interest which was no doubt visible in my face. “I told you,” she said, “that you knew something of my authoress; and wasn’t I right in adding that if you had known more, I should have been afraid to predict the consequences? Come,” she went on, “have I not won my cause? You cannot refuse me now: your heart is in the work already.”

“It is,” I said. “I confess it. But still I foresee difficulties—some of them specially incident to writing such a book in English. Give me to-day to think the matter over: and to-morrow I will tell you what I can really do.”

The difficulties which had first struck me,

and which first engaged my attention, were those which, in spite of what Countess Z—— had said, I thought might be experienced in concealing the identity of the characters; and the following day I pointed many cases out to her, where more disguise would be necessary than a mere change of name. On second thoughts she was disposed to admit this; but, on the other hand, she now went on to explain to me a variety of things which the manuscript only imperfectly indicated, such as the position and circumstances of each of the characters mentioned in it, and the precise extent to which the salient facts of the story escaped the notice of the society in the midst of which they occurred. And the result was to convince me that she had been substantially right from the first, and that the book she was anxious I should attempt might, without any imprudence, be so written as to be minutely and literally true, not only in all essentials, but in point even of local colour—indeed that many of the facts would be disguised most completely, if they were taken

from the manuscript without any change at all.

That book accordingly is now offered to the reader. As to what the changes are which I have been obliged to make, I cannot say more, or the object of those changes would be defeated. For the method of narration and for the style, indeed, I am myself of course responsible; but whatever may be thought of this part of the book, and whatever else I may or may not have contributed to it, I can say of it at least one thing with confidence, even if it is not a piece of literature, it is a piece of life: it is genuinely a human document.

And this brings me to a very important point. It is precisely because the book is true in this wide sense that there are certain difficulties, as I said to Countess Z——, specially incident to its being produced in English. In the English fiction of to-day, it is a universal rule that the men, and especially the women, with whom the reader is invited to sympathize, shall always stop short in their

relations to one another at a certain point, whatever may be their dispositions and circumstances. It is also a rule equally universal, that any grave transgression of the conventional moral code shall entail on its transgressors some appropriate punishment, or at all events that it shall not end in their happiness. In the present book neither of these rules is observed. The characters violate the first; their history violates the second; and the reason is that this book is true to life, whilst to a great part of life the rules are absolutely untrue. The fact remains, however, that in this country these rules supply to a numerous class of readers a sort of moral standard by which all fiction is judged; and the book is consequently one to which many people may raise objections. I think it best to admit this fact plainly, and to state, in a brief and general way, how I should answer such objections myself, supposing them to be really raised. I should not consider it a sufficient answer to say that every detail mentioned in it was taken from actual life;

for it is quite possible so to select such details, as to misrepresent the life of which they formed a part, and to convey a false idea of human nature generally. This, in my judgment, is precisely what is done by M. Zola. His fault is not that he exhibits the operation of certain passions, which our English novelists forbear altogether to deal with. It is that he represents those passions as covering a larger field than they do; and that the other elements of life, which are of at least equal importance, are dwarfed by this treatment into a grotesquely false insignificance. This is not the fault, however, of such writers as M. Zola only. It is the fault of writers such as Miss Yonge also, and if we try both by the same severe standard, *The Daisy Chain* must be condemned for the same reason as *Nana*. Neither are true to life, for each excludes one half of it. No doubt *The Daisy Chain* has this point in its favour—that it is, as it was meant to be, a good book for children, whereas a book like *Nana* is a good book for nobody. But what is good for children is useless for



men and women, who differ from children mainly in their inevitable experience of so much that we shelter childhood from even hearing of prematurely. To men and women, who are capable of observation and reflection, and who are neither depraved nor abnormally innocent, life is essentially a combination of widely different elements. Whatever may be our definition of good or evil, and however remote as an abstraction the one may be from the other, we see that as realities they are everywhere in the closest contact, sometimes fretting each other, sometimes apparently united, not only in the same society, but in the same people and in the same motives and actions : and the interest of life depends upon neither separately, but on the constant and ever-changing relations between the two ; the evil losing its meaning when considered apart from the good, and the good losing its meaning when considered apart from the evil. Hence it follows—and surely nobody can dispute the fact—that any picture of the one must be

misleading and incomplete, unless it is part of a picture equally complete of the other. Now my case on behalf of the present book is this—that it presents us with a picture equally complete of both ; and that its various details are not only true individually, but form collectively a true representation of life.

It may, however, still be urged by some that I have not so much as touched upon the important question yet. The important question, they may say, is not whether the book is true, but whether it is moral. My answer would be this—that if it is true in the sense I have just described, it is as moral or as immoral as life is, neither more nor less. If it is immoral to show, as actual life shows, that the hard and fast division between good and evil, which undoubtedly exists in the region of abstract theory, and which for certain purposes it is undoubtedly necessary that we should recognize, does not exist in the lives of average men and women ; and farther, what is still more important, that good and



evil fortune do not follow, in any invariable way, on what moralists classify as good and evil conduct, but are constantly apportioned, without any apparent reference to the conventional requirements of retributive moral justice ; if it is immoral to show all this, then it must be admitted that this book is immoral. But in that case we must make another admission also—that life is immoral in precisely the same sense ; that whilst moralists teach one thing, it teaches another, and that no picture of it is fit for good people to look at, in which half of its distinctive features have not been suppressed or altered.

If any one takes this view of the case, I cannot, here at least, attempt to argue him out of it. I must content myself with saying that the view is not mine, and that I hold to the opposite, and, indeed, the only other alternative. I believe that morality is only worth inculcating because, and in so far as, its motives, rules, and sanctions correspond to the realities of life considered in its entirety.

I believe, therefore, that any picture of life, if only complete so far as its subject goes, will be sure to convey some moral or other, though what that moral is may vary with the minds that look for it. It will in any case be sounder than any that could be conveyed by illustrations manipulated for the special purpose of conveying it; and a complete autobiography of the conscience of a single profligate, were such a thing possible, would teach us more than a dozen descriptions of the selected pieties of saints. How far such teachings would, in their practical tendency, correspond with those which are conventionally called moral in this country is doubtful. Sometimes the correspondence between the two would be complete and striking; but sometimes the former would certainly contradict the latter, if not in their most important, at all events in their tenderest, points. This must be admitted as a general truth; but readers of the present book, which is all that we are here concerned with, if affronted by

finding in it anything not moral in the conventional sense, will at all events be comforted by finding under the surface much that would coincide with the morals of the most conventional sermon. If they are scandalized by being shown that people who have many undoubted virtues can yet deliberately commit certain offences, they may learn a sharp and salutary lesson in charity by being shown that people whom they would curtly classify as offenders may yet have virtues which perhaps in themselves are wanting. If they see consciences easy which they think ought to be troubled, they will see consciences troubled which superficially seem easy. They will see, in short, what ought to edify them more than anything, even if it does not happen to do so, that the sense of virtue and the practice of right conduct are far from being the monopoly of those who are technically virtuous. Finally, if the book is complained of because people who are not technically virtuous are shown in it to have been ultimately happy, as such

people often are, I would point out that their happiness, such as it is, results from qualities in them which every one must admire, and not from those of their actions, which perhaps most people will condemn.

## CHAPTER I.

ONE spring afternoon of the year 18—, the departure side of the Gare de Strasbourg at Paris was occupied by a passenger train of somewhat unusual aspect. It was composed of long carriages, which were entered and connected together by covered balconies projecting at the ends of each. Within, through rows of windows, a narrow passage was visible, from which opened a series of small compartments, whilst the foremost carriage was a species of gilt restaurant, filled with small dinner-tables, and already gleaming with table-cloths. This was the Orient Express, about to start for Constantinople. It being a train which in all carried but sixty passengers, each with a berth booked and reserved beforehand, there was on the platform little

bustle or crowding. Trucks piled with luggage were being wheeled slowly to the van; and the owners were most of them saying good-bye to friends, or being shown their places by conductors in snuff-coloured livery. Their aspect, generally, was opulent, without being distinguished. There were men—Jews and Germans—who looked like successful merchants, with fat stomachs, and hands with heavy rings on them. There were French and German ladies of vague conditions in life, who had an air as if they expected to be sea-sick, and seemed dirty and pale already with the mere anticipations of their journey; and amongst them all were an Austrian count and countess, he examining his fellow-travellers with a smile of curious superiority, she with a look of quiet, refined distress, tempered by aristocratic resignation.

There was also another curious spectator, who had evidently completed all his preliminary arrangements, and standing on one of the balconies was placidly contemplating the scene. He was a dark man, with dark,

almond-shaped eyes, which, assisted by his moustache and teeth, kept a chronic smile shining; whilst the curled brim of his hat, the startling pattern of his clothes, his lavender gloves, and a large gold-headed cane, loudly besought the world to recognize and respect him as a *viveur*. He had, indeed, at the moment another and still higher claim to the character; for he was engaged in what was apparently a farewell conversation with a lady, beautifully but somewhat extravagantly dressed, who was one of the best known, though hardly the freshest, of the flowers of the Parisian *demi-monde*. Neither of the two seemed saddened by the thought of separation, but rather to be rejoicing in the consciousness of a highly satisfactory past; and their happy laughter, as they commented on the people round them, was tempered solely by a glance or two of ostentatious tenderness. Only once was the man's good-humour ruffled, and this was by a porter, who, entering the carriage with a bag, slightly jostled him, and trod accidentally on his toe. The smile in an instant



became a vindictive grin, and a string of imprecations, some in French, some in English, shot from his mouth, softly but with extraordinary vigour.

“*Doucement ! doucement !*” said the lady, in a metallic undertone of remonstrance. “You know, *mon ami*, yours is a nasty little devil of a temper ; and all I can say is, I’m thankful I’m not your wife.”

“And so am I, *chérie*,” laughed the man, who had instantly recovered himself, his smile coming back with such an impetus that it took the form of a leer. “Look, look !” he continued, “here is some swell, and no mistake. Did you see what a bow the *chef de gare* made to him ? And that man with him, carrying a despatch-box, belongs to the British Embassy. I’ve seen him sometimes getting luggage passed at the *douane*.”

The lady, having studied the new-comer, flashed a glance on her companion, from eyes that gleamed like a couple of sunlit window-panes, and said—“Are you getting jealous ? I’ve taken a fancy to him already.”



“Have you, darling?” replied the other. “It’s a pity you’re just too late. However, at all events, you can enjoy a good long look at him. Don’t you see? They’re coming to this carriage.”

He stepped down from the balcony, and, resting his hand upon her arm, remained with her watching the group that was now approaching.

“This way, monsieur,” said an official, full of importance. “The compartment reserved for you is at the far end of the passage. *Numéros quinze et dix-huit*,” he went on, to a valet and railway-porter, whom he ordered to enter first, with monsieur’s various properties, including the despatch-box, which already had roused attention.

“Ah,” said the lady, “I heard him speak. He’s an Englishman. You, my friend, would claim him as a compatriot; though your eyes and your name—myself I think both beautiful—would prevent this insular aristocrat from paying you back the compliment.”

At this the gentleman made a little cluck

with his tongue, as if rendering a tribute to the lady's delicate wit.

"St!" he said presently, "here your aristocrat comes again. He looks about him as if no one were worth considering. You know the English phrase, that *a man gives himself airs*. There's a man who exactly shows its meaning."

"Don't tell me," replied the lady, "what a man means by his looks. This man means one of two things, or very probably both—that he thinks, *chéri*, very little of you; or that he's thinking a great deal about something or somebody else. Ah! *Mon Dieu!*—but see! something has roused him now."

The person who was the subject of all these observations, and who partly justified the tenor of them by a look of distinct good-breeding, together with an obvious inattention to the whole public about him, at this moment suddenly fixed his eyes on a fresh arrival visible at some little distance. This was a man, round-faced and fair-bearded, not distinguished-looking in the social sense of the word, indeed dressed in a way impossible in

the world of fashion ; but still bearing something in his aspect refined and suggesting intellect. What, however, had caught the attention of the Englishman, was not his intellect or refinement, but the fact that he appeared to be crippled, and, with no other assistance than that of a laden porter, to experience considerable difficulty in getting across the platform. The Englishman's face, as he realized this, softened ; a look for a moment flickered on it of irresolute shyness ; and then moving forward, and raising his hat to the sufferer, offered him the help of an arm with an air of such spontaneous kindness, that the eyes of the other, in accepting it, looked an almost disproportionate gratitude. It appeared that both had places in the same carriage ; so the lady and her dark-eyed friend had the pleasure of watching them as they entered.

“The lame one's a German doctor,” said the latter of these keen critics. “I saw his name on a label. If the loss of you makes me ill, ducky, I shall go to him for a bottle of medicine. Ah—*sapristi!*—in three minutes

we're starting. Come inside for a second—there's no one in my compartment—just to tell me that your heart is broken at leaving me.”

He entered the carriage; the lady lightly followed him, filling the narrow passage with a rustle of scented silks. Presently from one of the compartments the sound of a kiss was audible. Silk skirts again rustled towards the balcony, leaving behind them the air heavy with patchouli. The lover followed: a conductor with ironical deference said, “It is time for *Madame la Comtesse* to descend.” The lady from the platform kissed her hand to the lover; the lover from the balcony kissed his hand to the lady; and then as the train slowly got into motion, with an air of jaunty triumph he retired into the interior of the carriage.

The Englishman, meanwhile, had been helping the doctor to settle himself. The latter, however, was unfortunate. The compartment in which his place was allotted to him had three other occupants, and it was

impossible for him to lie down, or even to lie back, comfortably. Of this the Englishman almost at once took note.

"My dear sir," he said, "my own compartment is empty; you will be much better off if you will do me the honour of sharing it with me."

The doctor, who was just seated, looked up surprised, and with thanks, which hesitated from their sincerity, accepted the invitation. His things were quickly seized on and removed by the benevolent stranger, who then offered him an arm, and conducted him to his new quarters; and here, with the aid of various rugs and cushions, he was presently enjoying a position suitable to his crippled state.

"If," said the Englishman, "I might venture on a piece of advice to you, it would be, that you should sleep for an hour or so. You look tired and exhausted. I am going myself to smoke in another part of the train; and by and by I shall be back again, and see how you are getting on. I assure you," he

added, checking the acknowledgments of the doctor, who gave him a glance like that of a grateful dog, "I am putting myself to no sort of inconvenience. I will shut the door, so as to leave you perfectly quiet; and as the compartment is reserved for me, no one else can disturb you."

These last words of the Englishman, spoken as he was in the act of going, brought a new expression, for a moment, into the doctor's face. It was an expression denoting that peculiar composite feeling—partly curiosity, partly surprised deference—which a man experiences, who having been talking familiarly to another, begins to suspect in him some unknown superiority or importance.

"Who," thought the doctor, "can this be, who travels *en prince* in this way?" And his eyes, before he closed them, rested in sleepy wonder on a handsome dressing-bag, stamped with gold initials, and a label with some writing on it, a part of which he fancied was "British Embassy."

The Englishman was clearly unconscious of



the impression he had thus produced : indeed no sooner was he outside the door, than his thoughts were turned for the time from the doctor altogether.

“That gentleman seems to be very ill.”

Such was the observation with which he was instantly greeted in the passage. He looked at the speaker with a certain feeling of surprise, and recollected the fact, which at the time he had hardly noticed, of having seen him with an over-dressed female, standing on the Paris platform. This was, indeed, the lover who had so lately been separated from his mistress. He spoke in English—an English that was not fluent only, it was glib ; but in his accent, just as in his appearance, there was something distinctly foreign. The Englishman’s first impulse was to answer him somewhat coldly ; but the eyes of the lover seemed so brimming with a wish to please—a wish to please even at the expense of cringing—whilst his attitude as he lounged against the side of the passage, smoking, had somehow so much the effect of an apologetic

ingratiating bow, that they secured for him a reception civil if not effusive.

“I have left the invalid alone, in order that he may be able to sleep a little,” the Englishman said, as he took out his cigar-case. He opened it, and found it empty.

“Have one of mine,” said the lover, as he produced his own—a gorgeous product of Vienna—and offered it distended to the Englishman. “Don’t disturb the sick man by going to look for yours. You will,” he went on confidentially, “find these are very choice.”

Bowing slightly, the Englishman accepted the offer. With his gloved hands the lover struck a light for him; and the Englishman, with obvious sincerity, acknowledged, after the first puff, that the cigar was of the rarest excellence.

“Yes,” said the lover, doing something with his eyes like winking, “I rather fancy myself on my cigars. Pah! This passage is draughty. What do you say to smoking in my compartment?”



The Englishman assented. His new acquaintance was a puzzle to him—exciting in him a certain feeling of contempt, but also at the same time one of curiosity and amusement.

“Whenever,” said the lover as he seated himself, “this train is not quite full, I always, if I wish it, get a compartment to myself. I know one of the Directors of the *Wagons-lits* Company—I’ve a friend at court—and—there’s the beauty of it—I don’t pay a farthing extra.”

The Englishman’s eye was caught by a bouquet on the seat beside him.

“The Directors, I see,” he said, “supply you with flowers also.”

“No,” laughed the lover, his face bright with knowingness, “not quite so good as that. These flowers were left here by a lady. I dare say you saw her at the station. I’ll tell you who she was. That lady was the great Fanny Harvard. You have heard of her?”

The Englishman admitted that he had; but he did so coldly and drily, and involuntarily

drew back in a way which to any impartial observer would have betrayed the displeased astonishment with which he received such confidences. His whole bearing and look seemed to be saying, "Who on earth is this extraordinary animal?" His companion, however, was conscious of no rebuff; but opening a bag of scented Russian leather, produced a photograph of a lady with bare shoulders, and smilingly handing it to the Englishman, said to him—"That's her last."

The Englishman looked at it; he hardly could do less; and a change, as he did so, slowly stole over his face. His mood seemed to be reverting from one of frigid disgust to what it had been before—one of curious cynical amusement. And indeed so far as amusement and curiosity went, he found himself presently not being ill repaid. His companion at first was constant to the subject of the fair sex, with whom, he seemed anxious to let it be known, he had, in various capitals, a wide and victorious acquaintance. He accidentally let it transpire that he was married,

and the father of a family ; but this admission did nothing to check his complacent candour. It happened, however, that in searching his bag for some portraits which should illustrate the type of the female figure in Warsaw, he came across a picture of a completely different character ; and this, to the Englishman's extreme relief, turned his conversation into a new channel. The picture was a photograph of a race-horse.

" Ah," he said, " look at that. Don't you call that splendid ? That's a photograph of the grand old horse Warrior."

Of this animal he explained that he was himself the fortunate owner, and that it had lately done wonders on some new race-course in Sussex. Then he enumerated certain remarkable instances of his astuteness and success in betting ; he talked discursively of trainers, jockeys, and horseflesh ; and his knowledge of these subjects, such as it was, was not confined to England, but extended to the Continent also. His range of topics, as he proceeded, widened like circles on water ;

and before long it included dogs, cards, and billiards. Then came a surprise. The Englishman asked some question with regard to the train they were travelling by, and his companion's answers, which overflowed with ready information, showed an intimate acquaintance with the management of the chief railways in Europe, and also a certain insight into the politics and commercial condition of various European countries, and of much of Asiatic Turkey. By and by they happened to show something more. They showed what seemed to be a certain knowledge of Art. The Englishman at first was surprised at this revelation; but pursuing the subject, he was amused to discern gradually, that what at first he had taken to be a feeling for art itself, was rather a sense, almost monkeyish in its instinctive quickness, of the price which, under various circumstances, works of art might fetch.

"I can assure you," said the lover at last, in a tone of confidential pride, "my house in England is crowded with *objets d'art*. My

whole collection has changed twice over since I married; and each time I've made thirty per cent. on what I paid for it. Listen—shall I tell you one little good story? I gave my wife, when I married, some splendid antique jewellery—in Paris I got it—which cost me three thousand pounds. We sold two-thirds of it for three thousand eight hundred; I gave her what was modern, and looked every bit as smart, and I had at the end a good twelve hundred in my pocket.”

“And did you,” asked the Englishman, drily, “make her some more profitable presents with it?”

“Ah,” said the lover, “that’s telling!” He smiled complacently for a moment, and then exclaimed, “I wish you could have seen one thing—a necklace which I gave to a certain fair *danseuse* in Vienna. I got that at Paris too. It once was Madame du Barry’s.”

The allusion to womanhood was fatal. The lover was like Anacreon. To whatever tune he might strike his conversational lyre, the notes seemed to become what might be called

by a euphemism, amatory ; and a new series of tender and successful experiences were now, with cheerful volubility, poured into the Englishman's ears, who listened to them for a time with a certain apathetic patience. The patience was mainly due to a singular characteristic in the speaker. In his look and manner there was such a complete absence of shame, that though the substance of his conversation was vulgar and even brutal in its profligacy, it had to the physical ear the most innocent and ingenuous sound. He laughed over his most repulsive anecdotes as a school-boy might laugh over his peg-top ; and his grossest comments on what he called "The points of a woman," might, so far as the mere sound of them went, have been a harmless remark on the colour of a flower or a butterfly. The Englishman at first, therefore, did but partially realize the nature of the intellectual treat that was thus so frankly offered him. It is enough to say that most of it is not fit to repeat. The Englishman presently found it was not fit to listen to. He was a man whose



face, whatever might be his general character, showed one thing at least in his favour—that he was not gross like his companion. A frown, which his companion entirely failed to notice, gathered gradually on his forehead ; his short utterances became shorter and more distant ; and before long he rose, and coldly, but with perfect civility, said he must be going back to look after the invalided doctor. The lover with perfect good-humour expressed his smiling sorrow, and rising also bowed the Englishman into the passage. There, catching sight of a feminine figure, which was apparently in the act of passing to the adjoining carriage, his appreciation of beauty was at once touched by its outlines, and smiling at the Englishman, like one augur at another, he sidled off in pursuit of it. The Englishman with a sigh of relief found himself in his own compartment.

The doctor was awake, refreshed, and in obvious comfort. He was just beginning to glance at a French novel, and one or two others were lying on a little table beside him.

The Englishman noticed their titles, and noticed them not with pleasure. "Has no one," he said to himself, "even a tolerably cleanly mind?"

The doctor had dropped his book; and his expression, as he turned to the Englishman, seemed to meet the unspoken question, frankly answering, "I have."

"These books," he said, "were lent me by a friend of mine—a medical student—to amuse me during my journey. Our ideas of what is amusing, or even readable, I think must be somewhat different."

Full of a sense of disgust at his late companion, the Englishman was delighted by the doctor's contemptuous tone, and replied that though he knew something of the books in question himself, he knew only enough to make him thankful he knew no more. "If," he added, "I may indulge my temper in a paradox, I should say that a dirty reader was worse than a dirty liver."

"I," said the doctor, "have thought little about literature, but I follow a profession



which forces me to think much about life; and I would venture to make the following literary criticism. Books like these, which seem to revolt both of us, are bad both artistically and morally, for one simple physiological reason. If a book is to interest, it must excite sympathy; and human nature happens to be physiologically such, that those sympathies which Christians were accustomed to call our lowest, are those which respond most readily to the least skilful literary stimulus. It is a sign therefore of weak art to appeal to them, since they are excited so easily; and it is bad morality to appeal to them, since they are excited so unmanageably."

"Yes," said the Englishman, "and it also is bad science; since it is difficult to appeal to them, in any picture of life, without exciting them disproportionately to the real importance of their subject."

"Consider!" exclaimed the doctor. "If the emotion of hatred and the appetite of thirst were roused by words as easily as what Frenchmen call *l'amour*, books would be

depraved and depraving which we now think moral as sermons. The novel of drunkenness would be as indecent as the novel of profligacy. *Mein Gott!*" he continued, "and in Paris it would be as popular. However, to do the Parisians justice, I fully admit the truth of what you observed just now—that their sensual novels make passion fill more of life than it really does. But this brings us to quite a different point. This, as you observed, is merely an error in science; and," said the doctor, with a mild smile in his eyes, "it is not confined to novels written in Paris. Your English novels of sentiment embody the same error as to love. They give it an importance which it does not possess in life."

The Englishman leaned back, with a low laugh of approbation. "Yes," he exclaimed, "you are perfectly right there. In some lives, no doubt, love may be the principal thing; but not in lives generally, and certainly not in the healthiest lives. Money-making, ambition, the mere pleasure of successful action, the placid affections of the family, amusement, a

sense of humour, and even material comfort—these for most men form the real landscape of happiness. Love is little more than some fleeting effect of sunshine.”

“You,” said the doctor, laying his hand on his crippled leg, “speak of the landscape of happiness as if that for most men composed the whole landscape of existence. But for most men it is composed of anxiety and disappointment also. I, for instance, have a wife and family who depend on me. I once had some money of my own, but it has been lost in a financial earthquake. For the last three months an accident has made me useless; and though now I have secured a practice in a small but rising watering-place, life for me at present is a landscape of fear and struggle.”

“And,” said the Englishman, “surely of hope also.”

“Bah!” said the doctor, rousing himself, “I spoke like a fool. I have hope as well as fear—to be sure I have. I have hard work before me, but I have something worth working for.

Again, as a man of science, I take the keenest interest in my profession; whilst I am also enough of an egotist to be tickled by some ambition. Do you see that?" he said, pointing to a leather case. "It contains a new apparatus connected with the operation of tracheotomy—my own invention. My special subject of study has been the affections of the throat. May I venture to ask what walk in life is yours?"

The Englishman for a single moment drew himself up, and his expression chilled into one of involuntary *hauteur*. But the question, blunt as it was, was yet put so guilelessly, that in another moment he softened, and answered with complete good-nature—

"I flatter myself that I serve, or am going to serve, my country. I don't mean with my sword," he added; "I am not like you—a tracheotomist."

Both men laughed. The Englishman turned to the window, and as if to change the conversation pointed to the sun, which was setting under clouds coloured like heather.

“Beautiful!” murmured the doctor in a tone of genuine feeling. “Beautiful! To me,” he went on, looking the Englishman in the face, “the deepest interest of medicine lies not in medicine but in man. A doctor can hardly help being more than half a philosopher; and even though he may be a materialist, more than half a divine. If we identify soul with body, that to us does but bring soul nearer. My thoughts have strayed back to what we were just now talking of. We were saying that the influence of love in life is exaggerated; but let us consider this. Why do you and I feel that sunset to be beautiful? Because of the same something in it of which love is one manifestation, and of which religion, or all longing for what is more than human, is another.”

“Let us hope,” said the Englishman, “that man’s belief in the object of his religion is more accurate than his belief in many of the objects of his love.”

“In the present day,” replied the doctor, “religion is a belief no longer. It is only

the raw material out of which some new belief will be fashioned. I hope I do not offend you. Perhaps I am speaking to a Catholic?"

"You are not," said the Englishman; "though Catholicism is the only religion that is logical."

"Yes," said the doctor, "and my reading of life as a materialist, is that our higher life can be lived only in defiance of logic. All forms of Christianity affect to explain too much. A belief which pretends to have no difficulties is a belief that solves none."

"And do you," said the Englishman, "as a materialist, consider a belief necessary? And what belief in the future do you think the world will accept?"

"That," the doctor answered, "the future alone can show. In the present state of knowledge, religion cannot express itself in any definite form which knowledge will allow us to tolerate. How will knowledge allow us to define God? Merely as the echo of man's



soul from the universe—a whisper which we impute to the stars. All the same, I still maintain this—that man is only human because of his longing for what is more than human. There, sir, you have my creed.”

“Yes,” said the Englishman, “and I think you have mine also; only we are apt under its influence sometimes to find this—that life has lost all its hopes, and death none of its terrors. However, we are not peculiar. I have talked with the leaders of science in my own country”—and he here mentioned names of European celebrity—“and though many of them were shy of making distinct admissions, at the back of their minds I believe that they felt as I did. You look surprised at my having any scientific acquaintances.”

The doctor hesitated.

“The plain fact is,” he replied, “if I may be excused for saying so, that you seem like a man of affairs, and like a man of fashion; and such men as a rule care little for men of science.”

The Englishman's face for a moment betrayed a feeling shared by many others, and somewhat difficult to explain. It showed that this speech pleased him, as though it were a kind of compliment. But the feeling vanished, and his look was again thoughtful.

"Well," the doctor continued, "and if our religion be such, I think we are bound to admit that love, and the ideas attached to it, play a more important part in life than we just now were admitting. The creeds of man's various civilizations have influenced his emotional development, but primarily they have been moulded by it; and what men believe about another life, depends largely on what their instincts prompt them to do in this. Now I haven't shocked you thus far—but perhaps I shall shock you now. The position of woman, in all countries, is changing. Her claims to some life of her own are growing and becoming recognized as they never were before; and love, whatever limits we may assign to its influence, is, with the cultivated woman of the modern world, the expression



of her highest life, when it does not happen to be the denial of it. When it is not a blasphemy, it is a religion. One of the chief changes then awaiting modern society, is some change in the present institution of marriage. It will not be a change in the direction of what is commonly called license, but in that of the ideal which the Christian marriage aims at, and which so often it so ludicrously fails to reach; but all the same it will be a change which, more than any other, will be opposed by Christian theology, and consequently instrumental in destroying it."

The Englishman laughed.

"You have not shocked me," he said, "but you have not convinced me. In my views of marriage I fear I am hopelessly conservative."

"Well," replied the doctor, "it requires more of the martyr's courage to live in a new way than to believe in a new way. My own marriage, I should mention, has been completely happy, so that I am no candidate for any social martyrdom myself."

"I could show you," said the Englishman, "a man in this train who is; and who is so devoted to his own way of living and loving, that he'll lay down his health for it, if he doesn't lay down his life."

He had hardly finished his sentence, when the door of the compartment opened, and the lover's face peeped in, wreathed in apologetic smiles.

"Mr. Grenville," he said—"forgive me for calling you by your name—the conductor told it to me—I came to tell you that there is dinner in half an hour. I have already secured a table. Perhaps you and this gentleman will share it with me."

So civil an invitation it was not possible to refuse.

"That's the martyr," said the Englishman, as soon as the lover had departed. "When you meet him at dinner he will give you his confession of faith."

The doctor found presently, from his experience in the restaurant, that this prophecy was strictly true. The lover, who had ordered

a magnum of the best champagne, and generously insisted on standing treat to his companions, excelled himself under the influence of the grape, and was more like Anacreon than ever, though he startled the doctor with a number of questions and confidences which had more connection with the province of Æsculapius than of the Muses. The doctor, like the Englishman, was entertained as well as disgusted. The disgust of the latter indeed was presently quite lost in a sense of humour. He happened to be taking a time-table from his pocket, and accidentally he put on the cloth along with it a small photograph of an ancient English manor-house. The lover instantly exclaimed, "How magnificent! How charming!" and spoke with fervour of the beauty of country seats in England.

The Englishman wondered at his showing so much feeling, but the next moment discovered that it was due to the following fact. The lover had found such houses excellent things to gamble in. In three cases—those

of three financial magnates—he had learnt that they were anxious to establish themselves in certain parts of the country. He had adroitly stepped in and bought houses at a bargain, which he resold at a profit to the opulent persons in question.

“One house,” he said, “was a Tudor castle ; and I got more for it from the fact that its roof was rotten, than I should have got had I spent two thousand pounds in renewing it. Eh, Mr. Grenville—that’s the way the world wags !”

Suddenly without rhyme or reason there succeeded to this a string of tremendous oaths. The doctor and the Englishman both stared at the lover ; every muscle of his face was rigid with intense vindictiveness, and the object of this was a waiter, who had spilt some gravy on his coat. The storm passed presently, and signalized its disappearance with a laugh ; but the following day before quitting the train at Vienna, the Englishman said to the doctor—

“I am puzzled about our friend’s nationality ; but did you notice when he swore at

the waiter how his fingers closed on his knife—his fingers with all those rings on them? I should be sorry to be a woman, alone with him, when he lost his temper.”

“Sir,” said the doctor when the moment came for parting, “I shall never forget your goodness to me a stranger.”

## CHAPTER II.

VIENNA that spring, owing to certain public events, was unusually full of foreigners ; and amongst them were numbers of the English who had been spending the winter on the Continent. Indeed, the British Ambassadors was fully justified in saying, as she said one evening to a cluster of old friends, that though that year she would be unable to go to London, for the last fortnight London had come to her.

This remark was made in her own drawing-room, where the guests were assembling for a purely English dinner-party, and where London diamonds and London silks and satins were glittering and glimmering under constellations of candles.

“My dear,” she went on regretfully, as she drew aside from the others ‘a distinguished-looking woman, the whiteness of whose well-crimped hair, due though it was to age, had the youthful effect of powder, “I thought, of course, that you would have gone in with Julian; but the Princess’s coming has disturbed all my arrangements, and I’m afraid I shall have to consign you to old Lord R—— instead. I am more sorry than I can say; but you’ll see that I’ve done my best for you. You will sit by his deaf ear, so you need not utter a word to him; and on the other side of you, you will have Robert Grenville.”

“Mr. Grenville!” said the lady whose fate was thus announced to her, “I met him first when he was an attaché in Paris, when half the French ladies were in love with him, and he had just published some love-poems. Somehow or other one has not heard much of him lately. He ought, with his talents, to have made more noise in the world.” Then, with her eyebrows slightly raised, and her lips for a moment smiling with a humorous self-



contempt, "If that man," she said, "had been born a generation earlier, I fully believe I should have fallen in love with him myself."

"I've no doubt you would, my dear," said the Ambassadors with a certain trenchancy, not malicious itself, but hinting a sense on her part of saying something that might be said maliciously. "You will, therefore, be happy to hear that he is now in a fair way to make as much noise in the world as even his best friends could desire. Let us ask Julian." And she turned round to her husband. "Just look at him. He is quite absorbed in your niece. It is always with him a case of the 'eternal feminine.' Julian," she said, "Lady Ashford is asking about Mr. Grenville. She would like to hear how a poet is going to rise to fame."

The Ambassador was indeed engrossed in what seemed his most frequent occupation—that of talking to the youngest and prettiest woman in the room. When thus appealed to he made no answer for a moment, but murmured to his companion, in his low indolent

voice, "Did you ever know a poet? If you didn't, you must keep your eyes open, and you will see one to-night eating his dinner opposite to you." Then, lifting himself from his seat and coming towards his wife, he put his hand on her arm with a charming air of devotion, and said to Lady Ashford: "So you are talking of Robert Grenville. Many people, most likely, will soon be doing the same. I had a letter yesterday from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and he told me that never, in all his former experience, had he met any one with such a natural genius for finance."

"Finance!" echoed Lady Ashford. "What on earth are you talking about? What has finance to do with Mr. Grenville the poet?"

"Our poet," said the Ambassador, "is unfortunately a poet no longer; and the crown that is now held out to him was never woven by the Muses. What has happened to him has been this: I thought that of course you had heard of it. Just before the opening of last autumn's session, the Chancellor of the

Exchequer lost one of his secretaries, and found himself suddenly overwhelmed in a country house with more work than he could manage without assistance. Grenville, who was staying there also, offered to do what he could for him. He did so, and with results that astonished the Chancellor and himself equally. He continued to act as secretary for the whole of the next six months: and now, when Sir Jacob Jackson goes home in July, Robert Grenville will take his post at Constantinople. If he can deal with the difficulties which are accumulating and awaiting him there, he may easily find himself at once one of the foremost figures in Europe."

"Well," said Lady Ashford, plaintively, "it's an odd metamorphosis. One could never have thought that—what shall I call him?—well, a drawing-room love-poet, was the sort of stuff out of which fate could make a financier."

"There are," said the Ambassador, "two sorts of love-poets: the one with whom poetry is a substitute for life; the other with whom

it is a mere expression of part of it. The one is a dreamer whose ambition is passionate writing; the other is a man of action, whose ambition is passionate living. Grenville was of this last sort, and you can see it in all his verses. In every line you can feel what the man who wrote them was thinking about. He was thinking not about verse; he was thinking about a woman. To women, at any rate, this was their great charm. They showed that the writer would probably have been an interesting lover. Now, dear Lady Ashford," he went on, "of course you are aware of this—that of all important businesses, love-making in the world is the one which requires most knowledge of the world; so I don't think we need wonder if a man who excelled in that should be able to turn his talent to other practical uses."

"Julian," said the Ambassadors, "when you have done your discourse on poetry, I want to inform you that here is Princess Plekonitz."

"My dear friend," exclaimed the Ambassador,

turning round, and looking as if he would take in his arms the figure that stood before him, "what ages since we met! The sight of you makes me young again."

The Princess was a short sharp-eyed woman of seventy, with a face which was bright with a kind of caustic benevolence, and on which age had re-written the smiles of her prime in wrinkles. She was English, an heiress—the widow of a Hungarian magnate; and as soon as her host was tired of retaining both her hands, she began to look round the room as if searching for old acquaintances. She failed, however, to discover any, even with the aid of her gleaming eye-glasses, till the last guest having arrived, the movement was made for dinner. Then suddenly, as she was taking her host's arm, "Who's that?" she asked. "Isn't it Mr. Grenville—Robert Grenville—Bobby, I used to call him? Yes, it's you," she called out, in a high-pitched and foreign-sounding voice, as a man at a little distance, who was just claiming his companion, turned round and recognized her. "It's me

too. Go on ; and come and talk to me afterwards."

Robert Grenville experienced an immediate consequence of having attention thus pointedly drawn to him. He had reached Vienna only a few hours ago ; he had entered the room only at the last moment, and except by his host and hostess his arrival had not been noticed. But rapid glances were now cast in his direction ; and he felt rather than saw that he was an object of appreciable interest. However small may be a man's share of vanity, there is this feeling something which is not displeasing to him. Robert Grenville, though he was less vain than most men, was suddenly conscious that his spirits rose a little ; and he sat down to dinner with a sense that he had more to say than he had, when a moment ago he was starting to leave the drawing-room.

This was lucky for the young lady of whom he had been given the charge. She was the daughter of a Colonial Governor, now on his way to England ; and though she was a little

subdued by the grandeur of an Ambassadorial dinner-party, yet under the surface were visible all the airs and graces which had claimed and rebuked devotion in the halls of Government House. Grenville had had a foreboding that conversation would not be possible with her, but he now felt nerved for all the demands of duty; and by the time she had freed her gloves from the embraces of a whole family of bangles, he had hit on a question which made his path clear for him. On the opposite side of the table was a man with a bulbous face, whom he remembered once to have seen perspiring with importance at the Foreign Office. He asked his neighbour—providentially in guarded language—if she knew who this gentleman was, hardly expecting that she could tell him; and she, with an arch smile and a little jerk of her head, said, “Don’t you know? That’s my *pater*—that’s Sir Septimus Wilkinson.” Then cheered by a sense of superior social knowledge, she continued, “Look there—that is Sir Theophilus Entwistle.” And she pointed out,



by a nod, another star of the Colonial Office, partially eclipsed for the time being by a napkin, the corner of which he was tucking inside his collar. Her eyes now made a careful tour of the table, and with increasing buoyancy she presently proclaimed to Grenville that she could, as she expressed it, "tell him about nearly everybody." The young lady's information was comprehensive rather than accurate. The names she mentioned were correct, and the persons named were present; but she was not successful in putting the two together; and Grenville was for the moment struck dumb with astonishment when somebody else was pointed out to him as himself. He was, however, far too good-natured a man to confuse his informant by any blunt and cruel correction; but, adroitly pretending not to have understood her meaning, he managed to set her right without showing that he had discovered her to be wrong. All this made a good deal of conversation; but at last the subject was exhausted, and Grenville's wit was failing him, when a spotty little attaché,

Miss Wilkinson's other neighbour, caught her bead-like eye and soon relieved him of her attention.

"Mr. Grenville, I am at last able to speak to you." The words were Lady Ashford's, and they sounded like a musical bell. Grenville turned round; his entire bearing changed, and his face took the look of interest which he had been just trying to simulate. "That young person," Lady Ashford continued, "seems to me to have made you very vivacious. She was your lawful partner certainly; but I'm sure you have done your duty by her, so you must now devote yourself to me and help to deliver me from mine."

"Ah," replied Grenville, "this is really delightful. I always thought talking to you a pleasure that could never be improved upon; but to-night it will have the added charm of an infidelity."

Lady Ashford's age was not far from seventy, but much of the beauty for which she once was famous remained with her, and

there still floated in her eyes a St. Martin's summer of youth.

"Is this," she said, looking at Grenville, "the result of a poet's philosophy? But you're no longer a poet—I ought to have remembered that; and now I remember that I want you to tell me what you are. Come, I must have your whole story out of you—the metamorphosis of the poet into the man of action. When did the change begin? How did you grow practical?"

Grenville looked at her with the shy air of a man who honestly hates being the hero of his own conversation; but Lady Ashford was at once so firm and so fascinating that she had soon extracted from him the information she asked for.

"Well," she said, when he had finished, "and so it all came to this. The world, when first you entered it, was enchanted for you by two necromancers, love and religion, who coloured it with colours, and filled it with objects of ambition, which gradually, as years went on, dissolved or faded from your sight,

till at last you woke up to what you now consider realities. Like most gentleman nowadays, you happened not to be rich ; and the first reality that came home to you was the want of some more money. Accordingly you began to dabble in what you describe as business, and you found your wits were far sharper than you expected. You did not, however, make your fortune in the first six weeks, and you were beginning to think that real life was a failure, when you suddenly stumbled into a high-road to success—a sort of success better than what you were looking for in the city ; for it gives you a promise not of fortune only, but of fame. Now to a man ambitious like you—for you always were ambitious—this luck ought to be intoxicating. Still, it is success not as you used to dream of it ; you dreamed of it with the feelings of a poet. You are achieving it as a practical man. I want you to tell me if it disappoints or satisfies you.”

“When it comes,” said Grenville, “I will tell you with great pleasure ; but I am not

aware that I have yet succeeded in anything."

Lady Ashford laughed softly. "Mr. Grenville," she answered, "do you know what I say to that?—Stuff! You have the opportunity of succeeding, and other people know you have. You are exciting expectations, though you have not yet satisfied them; and that, to a man in your position, is success in its most flattering stage. I heard our host saying, as he went in to dinner in front of me, that he never had known so rapid a rise as yours. You were always a figure of some interest in society; all of a sudden you are beginning to make a stir in it. I had realized this to-night before you entered the drawing-room. You cannot pretend you were unconscious of the same thing yourself. Well," she said, sighing, "listen to this. I was told long ago by somebody who ought to have known, how nothing is so sweet to a man as this first breath of applause—that it makes him feel as if his life were beginning to rise on wings. The dawn of fame must be like

the dawn of love. Once upon a time I used often to say that to myself. I want you to be frank with me, and tell me your own experience."

"Well," said Grenville, with an almost boyish embarrassment, which presently resolved itself into almost boyish frankness, "if you will have me expose myself, I *will* make the admission that I have some sense of success in me, something like what you mention; and I suppose it pleases me. Yes—yes: of course it does. I am going to be quite honest with you. I have so long thought and felt to so little purpose, that there is something exhilarating in the knowledge that I am now about to act; and in the hope that I shall not, as I began to think I should, pass through the world leaving no mark behind me, having done nothing, and having been nothing. But that's not all. I am also conscious of a certain fuss being made about me. I am ashamed to mention the little trifles I am thinking of; and yet I confess that they have the same effect on me



which a glass of champagne has on a man who has long been tired. But as to feeling as if I were going to rise on wings—no, Lady Ashford, I can't follow you there. My wings by this time have hardly a feather left on them, though once they were plumed with illusions bright as a bird of Paradise. And as to the dawn of fame being like the dawn of love—”

“Well?” said Lady Ashford.

“As to that,” he replied, “I can say nothing. What is love like? I cannot even remember. For good or evil, it is an impulse which has slipped out of my life; and I cannot call it back again. Indeed I am not certain if I should wish to do so.”

Lady Ashford looked at him for a few seconds in silence, and then said, “Never mind. It will come back to you one day. Let us put all our talk about ambition and success aside. The real story of your life, Mr. Grenville, is still to come.”

“Why do you think so?” asked Grenville, with a certain natural curiosity.



“Because,” she said, “in spite of your good spirits, in spite of your sense of success, I see a want in your eyes, I hear a want in your voice, which a woman recognizes, and of which she knows the meaning. The reason why love thus far has made so little impression on your memory, is not that you found so little in it, but that you looked for so much more; and this *much more* your nature is still waiting for. Listen, and let me teach you a small fragment of philosophy. Some of the women—I hope you will not be shocked at me—some of the women who have loved best have been women who found that they could not love their husbands. And why? They have learnt how much they longed to give and receive, by realizing how much one man could neither understand or give. People talk about first love: but the thing they talk about is a fiction just as the Golden Age is. First love in reality is like a first attempt on the fiddle. The magic and the music only come with experience. To love successfully you must often have loved in vain. You think this is a

paradox, but it isn't. To make love complete—you may take a woman's word for it—it must be not only a giver of joy, but a healer of sorrow also; a resurrection of hope rather than its birth. A boy's love may be life: a man's love is another life. This, Mr. Grenville, is the love which you are waiting for; or, if you like it better, which is somewhere waiting for you. And you may trust me in this, that when such love comes to a man, the passions of youth can show nothing to equal it. Don't despise my prophecy, because it comes from an old woman. You will find your fate: and old as I am I still remember mine."

"Yes," said Grenville, half involuntarily; "but you are a woman, and a woman who has once loved and remembers it can never be old."

"And a man," said Lady Ashford, "is always young, so long as a woman who is young loves him."

"Unfortunately," said Grenville, laughing, "no young woman loves *me*." But then he suddenly checked himself and went on in a

different tone : “ Lady Ashford, you prophesy like an angel ; but unfortunately I hear you like Sarah behind the tent-door. Do you remember just now how you summed up the biography of my youth ? You said that love and religion were two necromancers who had enchanted life for me. You were wrong. The real necromancer was the Imagination, which we used to think was the child of the other two, but which science and experience at last show us to be their parent. The children die of shame when we discover their parentage ; and the Imagination itself cannot survive its children.”

### CHAPTER III.

THE conversation was here arrested by a sharp and startling sound. The chimney of a large lamp, which was in front of Grenville, had broken ; some disturbance was caused by the servant's removing it from the table ; and when Grenville again was in a position to speak or listen, Lady Ashford's ear had been captured by her other neighbour.

“And so that is Mr. Grenville, to whom you have just been talking ?” Lord R—— was saying slowly, in the loud penetrating tone which deaf people, who require it to be applied to themselves, are not unfrequently accustomed to apply to others. Like many deaf and elderly people also, Lord R—— seemed always to be living in a little world of his own ; and

he had a charming habit of discussing those close to him, as if he were as much out of their hearing as they were out of his. "A very clever promising young man," he went on. "I knew his father intimately—a very, very, very clever young man."

Grenville judiciously tried to escape from his own praises, and fixed his attention on the opposite side of the table. He found no difficulty in keeping it there. For the first time he saw an object facing him, which up to now the lamp had entirely hidden. It was the young girl—Lady Ashford's beautiful niece—to whom, before dinner, the Ambassador had been so gallantly devoting himself. It was impossible not to be struck by her—by her dazzling skin, by her dark melancholy eyes, and still more by an indefinable something—a something in her expression, her dress, her bearing—which gave her, despite her girlhood, the air of a married woman. Sitting next to her was Sir Septimus Wilkinson, talking to her with a voluble but elephantine eagerness, and giving point to his

eloquence by gesticulating with his thick fingers. She, at the moment when Grenville first caught sight of her, was looking down with a sort of contemptuous self-possession, and amusing herself with examining her own beautiful hands. A moment later, and for a moment only, he saw her glance up at the shapeless face close to her, as if doubting and wondering whether a thing like that could be really made of the same flesh and blood as herself. Rapid as the glance was, Grenville felt that he understood it. The second after the girl's eyes met his own. As they did so, they seemed to expand softly, a certain light flashed up out of their depths, and there was the slightest undulation imaginable in the lines of her scarlet lips. Then all was over; she coolly turned away from him, and with a condescending animation began to address Sir Septimus.

No sooner had this happened than he was once more conscious of his own name being mentioned in tones as audible as before. "And now," Lord R—— was saying, "he's

soon going to be married—that is to say, you understand, if he succeeds in his new career.” Lady Ashford tapped him on his threadbare sleeve with her fan, doing her best to stop him. He took it for encouragement, and his voice became even louder. “The young lady’s Lord Solway’s niece—Lady Evelyn Standish—a very nice girl, a dear charming girl; and if she marries with her uncle’s consent she will have a considerable fortune. He will consent if Mr. Grenville succeeds—I know this for a fact: he told me so himself, but the matter is not yet to be spoken about.”

Lady Ashford did the only thing to be done. She stopped any further disclosures by turning abruptly from the speaker; and she fixed her eyes with an odd look upon Grenville. There was surprise in them, and amusement in them, and also a wondering and half-reproachful inquiry.

“Mr. Grenville,” she said, “this revelation is a judgment on you. Here is the man who never can love again. When we were talking just now, you were arguing under false colours.”



“No,” said Grenville, gravely, “I think not. That poem, or, if you like it, that prayer, of the spirit and of the pulses—that wild and soaring impulse which, if my memory serves me, takes us off our feet, and of which we were speaking when we spoke of love—surely this is not essential to a happy marriage; perhaps it is hardly compatible with one.”

“I’ll tell you, Mr. Grenville,” said Lady Ashford, “what I should advise your doing. If you don’t keep a diary, begin one this very night. Put down in it just what you now are feeling, which no doubt actually is what you have been trying to tell me. Do that; and the time will come when you will laugh as you look back to it. Or perhaps you won’t laugh—perhaps you will do something else.”

“Do you think,” said Grenville, “that I shall only learn to love, by finding out that I cannot love my wife—whom, I may as well tell you, I have not yet asked to marry me? But come—let us drop *me*. As a subject, I must be quite exhausted. Suppose we talk about that lovely young lady opposite. I

never saw such a pair of eyes in my life. Who is she?"

"She is my niece—Juanita Markham. Her mother was a Viennese. She has come here to see her relations. Yes—she has beautiful eyes—poor girl! She, too, Mr. Grenville, has all her life before her."

"And what," said Grenville, "is the fate you predict for her? Do you think that she, before she learns to love, must find out that she cannot love her husband?"

"I hope not," said Lady Ashford with sudden sadness. "There are many things which we excuse in ourselves, and which we should yet dread for our children. See—we are moving. We all go out together. There is Princess Plekonitz looking at you over her shoulder."

Grenville during dinner had not known that he was being flattered; but when he reached the drawing-room his condition was like that of a man who feels the effects of wine on going into the fresh air. The dress, the lights, the mirrors, the white and gold of the walls, had

now a brilliance for him which he had not noticed before. It seemed all to belong to his life, as an appropriate setting does to a stone. In another moment this impression became yet keener. He was rapidly surrounded by the more distinguished of the guests—by men with stars, and women glittering with tiaras. He knew them all more or less, and had been accustomed to certain civilities from them. But he felt that now they were offering him some wholly unfamiliar tribute. He was the centre of a circle, not part of its circumference ; and he learnt a truth which can be taught only by experience—how different these two positions, so near together, may be.

From one such moment he passed on to another. The Princess Plekonitz had a circle round her also, of people talking or wanting to talk to her ; but the instant his eyes met hers he saw it was himself she was thinking about. She beckoned him to her sofa with a movement of her fan and of her eyebrows ; and the others, as he came up to her, separated. A couple of young men, however, did not go far,

and he soon understood the reason ; for sitting beside her on the sofa was the beautiful Miss Juanita Markham.

The Princess with effusion held out a wrinkled hand to him. She expressed a vivacious pleasure at thus unexpectedly seeing him ; she recalled the old times when he had stayed at her house in England ; and complimented him on his prospects in a way that would have sounded fulsome if the strong foreign accent, which she had acquired in living abroad, had not sufficed to confer a peculiar privilege on her English. All the time, however, though he listened and responded cordially, he could not prevent a certain part of his consciousness being occupied with Miss Markham, and the fate of her two admirers. These last he had taken in at a glance. They were indeed attached to the Embassy, and he more or less knew both of them. They were well-bred young men, with the quietest manners imaginable ; and if ordinary expensive dissipation means knowledge of life, they were probably right in

flattering themselves that they were complete men of the world: but the girl's manner to them—a manner even quieter than their own—reduced each of them—Grenville could plainly see this—one after the other, in his own estimation, to a boy. Their first observations had been made with a smiling confidence. She had smiled also, and replied with complete civility; but joined to that civility was a yet more complete indifference, which seemed to produce, as it were, some chemical change in their characters. They blushed; they repeated their words; their laughs became doubtful and apologetic; and they presently found that nothing was left for them but to retreat, with an air that betrayed discomfiture, whilst it aimed heroically at indifference.

“Listen,” the Princess was by this time saying to Grenville: “the thing is quite simple; I will tell you all the particulars.”

Whatever the particulars were they threatened to be long in telling; and Grenville, who had been standing hitherto, unconsciously

scanned the sofa, as if to see whether there was room for him to be seated. Miss Markham, with extraordinary quickness, caught the meaning of his look and, raising her eyes to his with a full unflinching softness, moved so as to make a place for him between the Princess and herself.

"Thank you," he said, as he sat down; "I hope I am not crushing your dress."

"You are not," she replied, with a smile on her lips, which were half parted. "But I think you have done one thing. Do you see what it is? You have hurt a feather of my fan." And, as if to explain the injury thus complained of, with a movement that might have seemed accidental, she drew the feather across his hand.

"Allow me to look at it," he said, with a slight accent of ceremony. "I trust I have done no harm." And he offered, as he spoke, to take the fan from her to examine it. But she, giving the feather a little semi-petulant pull, said, "No, after all I think it has not been broken." And showing him for a moment



the faint remains of a smile, she folded her fan before her and gave her attention to the carpet.

This little episode over, and it did but occupy a minute, Grenville turned to the Princess, and seemed at once to forget it, in the interest of the subject which he was soon busy discussing with her. It was a subject, as any one might have seen, who caught any fragment of the conversation, involving the settlement of many practical details; and any one might have seen also that a conclusion was at last arrived at about it which was highly satisfactory to both the parties interested, and had given to Grenville, indeed, a look of greater excitement than his face had shown before during any part of the evening.

At this juncture the Ambassador approached the sofa, and speaking with a grace that made a refusal impossible, asked Miss Markham if she would sing. Lady Ashford indeed interposed, saying, "She has brought no music." But Miss Markham, simple in her absolute self-possession, admitted that she could sing by heart; and rising, with a well-bred smile, was



forthwith seated at the piano. She was soon surrounded; and Grenville, to his own surprise, found himself standing nearest to her. Her eyes had invited him to attend her, and he had obeyed the summons, not because he wished to do so, but because he could not, without rudeness, do otherwise. She raised her eyes to his—eyes dark and velvety like a heartsease—as he saw now; and drawing off her long gloves, gave them to him without a word. She sang. Her voice was low, but startling from the emotion that seemed to vibrate in it. Her audience listened breathless, but from surprise quite as much as from admiration; and Grenville heard the voice of the Princess mutter, “No young girl should be able to sing like that.” Sir Septimus Wilkinson, however, was far from sharing such an opinion. His eyes shone, and his forehead was moist with admiration. He clapped his hands, and vociferously asked for more; and most of the men, though more polished, were equally sincere in their applause. Miss Markham, however, could refuse a request as simply and gravely

as she could comply with one; and saying that she had just heard her aunt's carriage announced, moved towards Lady Ashford, who evidently wished to go. And now the entertainment yielded its last incident to Grenville. As Lady Ashford was in the act of saying "good-bye" to him, Miss Markham turned towards him also, as if to include herself in a common process of leave-taking; and then, with a look in her eyes of intentional hesitation, she held out her hand to his, and took his in a lingering clasp.

As soon as she was gone, he turned to the Princess. "You told me," he said, "that I had new prospects before me. The prospect which you held out to me, and which I never dreamt of till to-night, is the newest and most fascinating of all."

## CHAPTER IV.

GRENVILLE, that night in his bed, found himself pleasurablely restless, as he had hardly found himself since his first London season, when he had walked home from balls through the dewy stillness of Piccadilly, with music and palm-trees in his memory, some girl's voice in his heart, and the cool, dim primrose of the summer morning in his eyes. He made many efforts to sleep, but just as each seemed succeeding, some fresh thought would touch him, which allured him back into wakefulness ; so that at last he got up, and, partially redressing himself, he prepared to act on the only one of these thoughts which was at the present moment capable of being acted on.

“ I will do,” he said to himself, “ what Lady

Ashford suggested; I will begin a diary. I will describe my present situation and prospects, social as well as mental. Some day or other the reading it may keep me awake. At any rate, writing it will now help me to sleep."

He found a note-book in his dressing-bag sufficiently suitable for his purpose; the earlier pages indeed being full of old memoranda, but the greater part being blank; and without a moment's hesitation, began his first sentence thus—

"The day after to-morrow, I am going to do something so strange to me, so unexpected, and so interesting, something suggested to me for the first time this evening—" He paused, scratched this out, and presently made a new beginning.

"Lady Ashford," he wrote, "told me, as to one point, the truth about myself. I am, as she said, ambitious, and always was so. But I am better than merely ambitious, for I will be just to myself. I always longed to receive the external insignia of success—fame, in-

fluence, place, personal deference; but I have longed to deserve these quite as much as to receive them. Had I deserved them without receiving them, I should perhaps have despised life. Had I received them without deserving them, I should certainly have despised myself. And yet why? Why to me should self-respect be a thing so sacred? What meaning can I attach to it? Could I only give this question a logical answer, I should have what, as I told my friend the doctor in the train, I have not, and what he has no more than I; I should have a creed which I could express and live by—a religion made visible by reason, or, in orthodox language, by the *Logos*.

“But I am not writing theology. Let me get back to myself. To put a plain thing in a plain way, I have always, so long as I can remember anything, had in my blood—I don’t know how else to describe it—a sense that I was a person who, for some reason, ought to be a personage. This seemed to me to be simply in the fitness of things. It is a fitness, however, that I have been always missing. A

certain reputation I have achieved, no doubt. My early volume of poems—my only volume—gave me some fashionable celebrity. I devoted myself to science and philosophy; and great thinkers and discoverers considered me worth talking to. But my reputation has never been more than this—the imputing to me the capacity of success I have never realized. Let me be quite frank. I have missed my opportunities; I have not made myself distinguished: and not to be distinguished, for a man like me, is a humiliation. It is to have fallen from an estate to which my hopes instinctively had raised me, and my right to which, from a boy, I had never doubted. But gradually I was ceasing to be conscious that this humiliation was mine.

“In one’s prime, such a condition may be bearable, and its real character disguised, when social life still possesses its piquancy. But in maturer age—above all in old age—how wretched and unknown would be the creeping fate in store for me! Even now I have felt its paralyzing cold approach. For

even now, what am I?—or at all events, what was I yesterday? My early fame as a poet is already nearly evaporated, like stale scent on a pocket-handkerchief. I represent a family whose importance has long passed, and at last is as good as ruined. What reaches my own pockets from my mortgaged property is a thousand a year, barely; and a third of this I give to a poor, helpless relation—an aunt who was kind to me in my childhood, and who has lost most of her own small fortune by investing it without advice. My house—what good does its stately beauty do me? or the fact that Americans drive miles to stare at it? It is let to a brewer, and I live in a London lodging. How often have I shuddered at certain old men of fashion, with no home except a London lodging, and their clubs, and with no life except dining, shooting, and visiting with a dwindling generation of friends! And I have seen in their old age a flattered foreshadowing of my own.

“There! that part of my diary is done; and I have not winced in writing it; for true



as it was till lately, it is true no longer. Now all is changed. Sometimes I hardly know myself. I feel as if a fog had lifted; or as if, after walking for years on sand, I had suddenly gained firm ground. But never till to-night did I realize this fully. I am in a fair way now to making myself genuinely distinguished; I shall also, for a time at all events, receive a considerable income—what a strange thing to me!—and whatever advantages I thus gain, I may hope to consolidate by a marriage, which will not only bring me further fortune, but a home and affection also.

“All these blessings, so long as they were never in my reach, I had learnt to despise as a philosopher. I now look forward to them with the healthy eagerness of a child; and a hundred interests in life, which were lately like dead flowers, hold up their stalks and heads again.

“Let me put down the story of this marriage prospect of mine, and see exactly what it comes to.

“I knew Lady Evelyn Standish quite well

when she was a child. A year ago I met her again, as a grown-up young lady. I met her often, but I did not give much thought to her, till I gradually became conscious that whenever I spoke in her presence, she listened to me, and that she constantly followed me with her frank, guileless eyes. Hers is the kind of charm that one only sees if one looks for it; but the moment I saw it, it was a charm that drew me towards her, because—and in this I do not think I deceive myself—for some reason or other she was herself drawn towards me. The idea of a marriage with her soon shaped itself in my mind; but it was an idea which at that time I put aside as impossible. I knew that if she married with the approbation of an uncle, who is her guardian, she would in all probability have a considerable fortune; but neither to her nor to him would I present myself as a penniless fortune-hunter. Then my chance came; then my prospects changed; and without delay, though not without diffidence, I approached her guardian, and explained myself completely

to him. He received me with a kindness that was beyond all my expectations; and if I do not, within the next six months, disappoint both myself and him, he will fully sanction me in doing my best to win her. And he will do more. He will do what is a complete surprise to me. He will—that is, supposing the marriage happens—settle the property on her which marches with my own; and he will make arrangements by which, within a measurable time, my own may be freed from the greater part of its encumbrances. Can this be true? Will my own home ever be my home again? Shall I go with my wife up the avenue to my own door, by whose twisted pillars and under whose old brick arches my mother's eyes so often welcomed and said good-bye to me? And the rooms and galleries, which had grown so faint in my memory, and in which I find that I remember every picture, every cabinet, and every book-case—shall I, with a happy wife, one day redeem them? We shall—we actually shall, if one may put any faith in

probabilities. It all seems to me, in one way, like a dream; and yet I seem to myself, at the same time, less as if I were dreaming, than as if I were awakening to reality—to the place in the world that I was made for.

“Well—now I come to the point, for the sake of discussing which I was recommended to begin this diary; and which, no doubt, is important, though not for the reason that makes Lady Ashford think so. I am brought to it naturally, by telling myself my own story. I have spoken about a wife. What more natural than to ask what my feelings are about love? Upon my word, my feelings about it at this moment are so slight and lukewarm, that I am irritated by the mere idea of discussing them.

“This sounds a strange confession to make, after just confessing myself intent on a happy marriage. But to any one who looks that fact in the face, it is not strange in the least. Any such judicious person will acquit me of a paradox, when I say that the fact of my being no longer able to love, is the precise

fact which makes me so fit to marry. For by love what do we mean? We mean two things—now one, now the other. We mean, first, a mere caprice of the sentiment or the senses, which comes and goes like a squall, and does often as much mischief. I have suffered from love of that kind, as most men have. I can't say I have repented of having yielded to it; for such repentances are apt to be dirtier than such sins; but I have done better—I have got free from its influence. That girl this evening—her exquisite beauty I could see as well as most men, at once sensual and melancholy, like that of a lost angel; but till this moment, when she occurs to me as an illustration, since I said good-night to her, she has never once entered my memory. It needs no witch to tell us that love of this kind had best be over and done with before one thinks of marriage. But I am not talking of that. I am talking of love in another sense—in the sense of poets, and romances, and all men and women who can understand them. I am talking of that

despotic emotion which claims to extinguish, and which does extinguish, while it lasts, all other emotions, as the sun extinguishes a candle; which lifts us up, carries us away, alters by magic the relative value we put on things; and claims not to complete and crown the ordinary blessings of life, but to supersede them. This is what I mean by love, when I say that I am no longer capable of it; and I say well that I am fit to marry, in virtue of being thus incapable. For let me look at the matter fairly. The life of a man like myself ought to be largely in his work; unless it is so, it will be incomplete. But if you love a woman in the way I speak of, every interest is a rival to her; every interest is a wrong. Such love creates sins, just as the Scotch Sunday does. It turns a career into a kind of mental adultery. For a man like myself then, the love that would absorb all life is not fit to occupy any part of it. To love intensely is to be always saying one's prayers: and a man like myself must labour as well as pray. I am thus fortunate in being



able to say this of myself—that I can hardly now conceive of love as a thing that should practically alter the general arrangements of my life, though I can not only conceive but long for an affection that shall complete them.

“Yes, now I come to the real heart of the matter—the key to my seeming paradox. I have done with love—true; but there is another feeling—we may call it not love but affection—which condescends to accommodate itself to circumstances, and to take its luck along with them. It does not complain, as love does, like an unreasonable woman in a railway-carriage, if, when the train is full, it cannot have a compartment to itself: nor does it ask that others should be crushed together, in order to leave it the luxury of two seats; but taking quietly such place as may be vacant for it, it insensibly humanizes and blesses its fellow-travellers, instead of trying to push them out of the windows. Such an affection I can not only understand, but I long to give and to receive it. That I have it to give, I know. That I shall receive



it, I hope. It will not transfigure life with 'the light that never was on sea or land'; but it will be the light and warmth of a hearth which makes the chamber of life habitable, and which robs even the shadows of their mystery, their coldness, and their gloom."

In writing these last words Grenville had turned over a page, and was about to proceed, when something suddenly checked him. "What on earth," he exclaimed, "is here?" The cause of his exclamation was some lines scribbled in pencil. They were faint and not very legible, and he moved the book towards the candle. It was only when he had done this, that he saw them to be in his own handwriting, and also recognized them as verses. With puzzled curiosity, he began making them out; and at length, after much searching, he recovered the faded memory of what long ago had occasioned them. "Well," he said to himself, "as they are here I will ink them in. They shall stand here as a witness, either for or against, a kind of

susceptibility which I am myself delighted to have outgrown."

The verses in question were as follows—

"Faith may live, though long doubts chill it ;  
Charity will suffer much ;  
But for Hope—a touch can kill it,  
And it rises at a touch.

"Where the cinerarias glisten  
In your garden by the sea,  
At my side you once would listen,  
Till your cheek was close to me.

"Where your caverns breathe and murmur  
With the salt sea's sound and scent,  
Day by day your hand was firmer  
On my arm : until I went

"Whispering in imagination  
To your image on the air,  
All that love can teach to passion,  
All that both can learn from prayer.

"Go—go—go : for now I know  
All those days of vain desire,  
In your memory melt like snow ;  
But on mine they lie like fire."

Grenville read the verses over several times, smiling incredulously. He then took up his pen again. "What wretched words for songs," he wrote, "can be buoyed up into poetry, like a ship lifted by a tide, if they are set to passionate music, and sung with feeling. And that which music does for a song written by somebody else, may, in the case of the writer himself, be done for it by his own emotions. These verses of mine, for instance—I have no doubt when I wrote them there was some emotion at work in me, which made them for me full of sound and meaning. But now the emotion is gone, and they seem to me like something withered. They have lost a body, or they have lost a soul. They are like the ghost of a poem, or the fossil of a poem. They are in fact a type of my former self, and an illustration of the only way in which it survives in me—that self I have outgrown so utterly.

"And yet, no ; I am wrong there. Writing out one's thoughts in this way is like untangling a ball of string ; things follow one

another in such unexpected connection. It is perfectly true that, so far as any personal devotion goes, my days of romance are over ; but the effects on me of my past experience are far more than a mere ghostly memory. I see life with different eyes in consequence of it. All the women I have ever known and sought, seem in my memory to have become one, who has all varieties of sympathy and allurements united in her ; and this woman, or rather this womanhood, though silently withdrawing itself below the horizon of youth, is not lost, but colours the air of maturity with all the colours of a sunset.

“Let me ramble on about this subject a little longer. Most men love, I suppose, at one time of their lives ; but the love-memories of most of them are like decayed, or at least like dried, rose-leaves. The love-memories of others are like attar of roses. For these men, love in this changed form penetrates all their lives, breathing amongst their thoughts like the breath of spring in a wood, or perhaps like

the breath of autumn, and gives a soul to everything. That is the secret of my own feeling for nature—for such a sunset, for instance, as the doctor and I looked at: and here am I, without intending to do so, accounting for that feeling very much as the doctor did. For me, each beautiful prospect—a purple Italian twilight, an old silvery town shining in mist on a mountain-side—is, what without my experience it never could be; it is a keep-sake of some forgotten passion, and inspires life, as passion did, with what is really the essence of youth—a sense of possibilities still waiting for fulfilment.

“The string of my thoughts still goes on untangling itself. I see that, without thinking about it, I have mentioned two things together—an Italian twilight and an old town. There was more in that than mere accident, for the two things represented by them are curiously and closely connected—Nature and the historic past. Just as Nature suggests the lost romance of one’s own life, so does the past represent romance in general. Each

charms us by producing an illusion which will never be destroyed, because each presents us with a dream which will never again be a reality. We see the present reflected in the past, shining like a Golden Age, as we see the sky in water.

“This is no mere imaginary pleasure, for me at all events, though it is due to the imagination. I myself feel it to be real, delightful, invigorating; and my good spirits at this moment are mainly due to the fact that I am going to have a fresh taste of it. Thus all this discourse of mine about my own feelings brings me naturally to what a diary ought to be—a record of events. Here comes my story. I have been working so hard for the past eight or nine months, that I found myself at last growing quite unable to sleep—not however for the reasons that are keeping me awake now. What keeps me awake now is my imagination holding a holiday; what has been keeping me awake lately has been the refusal of my brain to take one. Schedules, statistics, calculations, drafts of financial schemes—these

are the things that have been haunting me at night like furies, driving sleep from my heavy eyelids as vigilantly as they could, and turning such short dreams as they could not keep away, into weary visions of pages of official paper, or grotesque echoes of official conversations. My health thus came to be such, that I have been ordered a six-weeks' rest, the first days of which were to be merely a change of work—consisting of some easy official business at Vienna. The remainder of the time is to be altogether my own. The Princess to-night asked me how I meant to spend it. I told her that originally I had been divided between two plans. One was an expedition along the Dalmatian coast, the other was a desultory wandering amongst some districts of Northern Italy. 'I am,' I said, 'devoted to old things—to old towns, old castles, old palaces, to the spectacle of old peasant life where it still remains unchanged, and old national costumes flashing in embrowned market-places; and in Dalmatia or Italy I meant to have seen my fill of them. But



as I went on I happened to learn from some friends of certain wonderful castles in Bohemia, and among the Carpathian Mountains.'

"The Princess suddenly interrupted me, screwing up her eyes with a smile of benign contempt.

" 'Bohemia,' she said, 'and the Carpathian Mountains! Nonsense! If you want to see castles, come and stay with me in mine, in Hungary; and I will help you to see as many others as you wish. Don't laugh like that. When I give an invitation, I mean it. If you cared for new things, I should have been afraid to ask you; but if you really like what is musty, why there's no more to be said; and you will have in my old owl's nest a musty old woman into the bargain.'

" 'If you wish me to stay with you,' I said, 'till you even suggest what you call yourself, you would have to keep me for the term of my natural life.'

" 'Pah!' she answered, 'I don't want compliments. I want to know if you are

going to do what I ask you. I go home to-morrow myself; and if you will arrive next day, a well-aired bed will be ready for you, and the fire in the parlour lighted. So come—decide upon coming, and stay as long as you can amuse yourself.’

“The invitation was so unexpected, and I was so delighted with it, that I could at first hardly believe her serious. But I soon saw that she was. My evident pleasure pleased her; and without more ado we proceeded to trains and routes. The journey is easy enough. There is a station near the castle; and going one way one can reach it in ten hours; going another, one must sleep a night on the road. ‘The last way,’ she said, ‘was by far the most interesting, as it takes one through a beautiful part of Styria.’ I therefore selected that. I shall start the day after to-morrow; and the day after that I shall arrive at this mysterious castle.

“Yes—in three days I shall be in the heart of a strange country—and a country how strange!—how interesting! It is a country

which always has haunted my imagination, owing to the fragments of description which from time to time I have heard of it. It is a country still of over-grown feudal households, where the retainers loyally kiss the hands of their masters ; where bears and wild boars roam in forests, whose alleys are watched by keepers in plumed hats, and in whose recesses brigands hide themselves ; where tribes of gipsies wander, and where gipsy bands play. It is a country which no doubt has known a political revolution, but no social revolution, or at the utmost only the shadow of one. Here is the past living still in the present. One crosses a Rubicon, and goes back a hundred and fifty years. Of course, to a certain extent, I write all this at random : the only Hungary that I know is the Hungary that I imagine. But I do not think, anyhow, I am wrong in expecting this—to inhale an atmosphere scented with the life of another century. Will not that be romance, as I said just now ? Will it ?—I shall fully appreciate it, if it is.

“At last—welcome! I feel it upon my eyelids—sleep. What an impartial author I must be, to go to sleep over my own productions—especially when the hero of them is myself!”

## CHAPTER V.

WHEN Grenville laid down his pen it was nearly one o'clock. At the same time, a couple of nights later, he had already been for some hours on his way to his unknown prospects. As one o'clock was striking from bells hidden in the darkness, his servant Fritz, an Austrian, who knew the country thoroughly, and to whom he had committed the entire management of his journey, had just roused him up and extracted him from the drowsy twilight of a railway-carriage—extracted him into a gust of night wind vaguely scented, and escorted him with his rugs and bags into the refreshment-room of some unknown junction.

“Our train,” said Fritz, “does not go for

an hour. Perhaps, excellency, you will allow me to order a little supper for you. See," he said, taking a list of refreshments from a table, "this soup is good—you get it never in Vienna: these sausages are good; and this wine—you should taste that."

Partly by way of getting rid of the time, partly by way of acknowledging his servant's care for him, Grenville let his supper be ordered, and sat down to wait for it. Half awake as he was, the scene seemed like a dream to him. The air was hazy with gas-lit filaments of tobacco-smoke; odd-looking men with peaked caps and spectacles were beguiling their minutes with beer at little marble tables, whilst their luggage, mostly in the shape of miniature canvas portmanteaus, lay at their feet like dogs. Muffled women with bundles came and went, or drowsed wearily on red velvet benches. Coffee-machines with great brass domes gleamed at a long counter, and the walls, lined with pitch-pine, made a bare background for everything, chequered with advertisements of unfamiliar liqueurs and

drinks. The whole place was charged with a sense of nocturnal travelling—of a fragment of active life strayed into regions of sleep.

Grenville ate his supper with curiosity rather than appetite, and then went out and smoked his cigar upon the platform. Near, in a valley, were the street-lights of some silent town; to the right and left were the scattered station buildings—masses of shadow starred with a coloured lamp or two; and all around were hills covered with pine-forests, which showed in the dim moonlight their serrated outlines against the sky. Grenville was ignorant of the name, and even of the locality, of the station. All the country round was steeped in the charm of mystery. By and by some figures issued from the refreshment-room, crossing the rails to another platform beyond; and before long, with a rumbling moan out of the silence, came a lighted passenger train, sliding, and hissing, and arresting itself. A few moments more, and it had passed away like a somnambulist.



Grenville looked at his watch, and his servant's voice at his ear said—

“Our train next. It comes here in five minutes. Here, excellency, is the station-master. He will keep a compartment, if he can, for you. I know him. His father was steward to the last Prince Plekonitz.”

Grenville turned round, and acknowledged the profound bow of a functionary, whose gold braid glittered and whose whiskers stivered with authority. A whistle pierced the night; there was another rumbling moan; and presently close to the group a procession of lighted windows, and shining sides of carriages bearing the word “Trieste” on them, moved and became stationary. The station-master was as good as his word. With much ceremony, after a little talk with the guard, he bowed Grenville into a reserved compartment, saying to the former as he did so, “His excellency alights at G——. —Your excellency will arrive there at half-past four in the morning.”

“Certainly,” said Grenville, smiling to

himself, as he stretched himself out on the cushions, "I am an exception to the rule that no man is a hero to his valet. Fritz imagines me a minister of state already; and what is even more to the purpose, he communicates his own conception of me to his friends."

The truth of this reflection was experienced even at G——, when in the chill obscurity of the station a commissionaire from the hotel, who had been joined by the guard the moment the train arrived, appeared at the door of the compartment, and assisted his excellency to descend. In these days everything has to be paid for; the bow of the departing guard indicated that he had been paid sufficiently; and Grenville before long, in a heavy rattling omnibus, was being shaken to pieces over the paving-stones of a dim angular street. After lasting for ten minutes, this torture came to an end; his vehicle halted abruptly under a huge resonant archway, and he presently found himself in an atmosphere of ghostly quiet,

passing to his room by the gallery of a frescoed hall, one side of which was covered with a coat-of-arms, and bore the date of 1620.

"This inn, sir," said Fritz, as he opened his master's door, "is very old—more than two hundred years."

And so it well might be, thought Grenville, as he closed his eyes. Already, into the present, it seemed to his imagination that the past had projected a long fantastic shadow.

The dreams of sleep are killed by a bright morning. The dreams of our waking life take often a new vigour from it. So, next morning for Grenville, a thousand new fancies, all of them children of the same waking dreamland, came floating into his room as Fritz opened the windows, and admitted, in doing so, a breath of that faint unfamiliar smell which whispers to a stranger's nerves the news that he is in a strange city. As for G——, it is no doubt perfectly true that many an Englishman might roam through

every street of it and be struck by nothing in any of them, excepting its inferiority to Bayswater; but the minds of some men, if not their eyes, are colour-blind. To Grenville the very names over the shops, the conformation of the roofs and chimneys, and even the shape of the long primitive carts, were things which touched his imagination as a breeze touches the sea, and made it shiver into new colours. Fritz was his guide for an hour or so, and did the honours of the place for him. By the middle of the day he was once more in the train, and was speeding away from roofs and streets and chimneys, and piercing the country, beyond whose borders was Hungary.

And now, indeed, a duller imagination than his might have found excitement in the scenes which were pouring past him. All the backgrounds of all the romances of the world seemed to him to be suddenly turning into realities; or else Nature itself seemed to be turning unreal, and to be receiving him into a universe of illusions. These moun-

tains covered with interminable forests, these green winding valleys, with tiled hamlets gleaming in them, these deeply-rutted roads flanked with wayside crosses, these water-mills with the Middle Ages clinging to their cumbrous wheels—pictures of this kind, each seen for a minute or two, and vivified now and then by bright-coloured rustic figures, came to Grenville all with a delightful magic about them—with an enchanted music like the overture to some new experience. What Englishman, even when travelling in his own country, has not at times felt something similar? Who, catching sight, through the moving windows of the railway-carriage, of some old orieled manor-house, half hidden amongst its avenues, has not seen in it the casket of some inaccessible novel, and imputed some breath of love to the slopes where the deer wander? And if this can be felt at home in our own modernized England, how would the feeling not be quickened in Styria—a land where the following vision presently startled Grenville?—an isolated rock, some

thousand feet in height, scarred with precipices and fledged with enormous pines, amongst which gleamed an ascending line of towers, whilst crowning the summit was a castle spiked with pinnacles. Within view of this spectacle was a little wayside station at which the train stopped; so Grenville was able to assure himself that what he looked at really existed. The whole structure seemed perfect. Glass gleamed in the windows. The train moved on and his eyes became more expectant. By and by, nearer the line, a hunting-lodge peeped out of the forest, with a great black coronet daubed on its white plaster; then, far off, like a ship's masts on the horizon, one or two towers rose above a sea of pine-trees; then came a station, having a red-roofed town near, with gray fortifications, masked by a line of lindens; and then another village and wild forest.

Gradually, however, the aspect of things changed. The mountains died away into long, low-lying slopes; and at last the train was moving in a sea-like expanse of plain, edged



at the remotest sky-line by low faint hills, cobalt-coloured. At first this transition tended to disappoint Grenville. Huge parallelograms of ploughland, alternating with waste and pasture, chilled his fancy with homely reminiscences of Lincolnshire ; but by and by his eyes came to be conscious of various strange details, which once more enchanted everything. The names of the stations had become uncouth and alien ; the words on the doors of the waiting-rooms and the offices were in an un-European language, suggesting no conjecturable meaning. Here and there on the plain, watching his wandering charge, was some solitary shepherd, or swineherd, grasping his long crook, and loosely covered with a capote of Oriental fashion ; whilst above the roofs of villages islanded in sprouting orchards, the towers of the churches showed themselves with bulging Oriental domes. Grenville now knew where he was. Everything spoke of Hungary.

So the hours wore on, the prospect hardly changing itself, till at last the traveller, thrust-



ing his head out of the window, descried in the distance a new distinguishing feature—an enormous poplar avenue straight as a line, crossing the whole landscape, and disappearing on each horizon. Watching this with a vague feeling of curiosity, he saw the trees grow more and more distinct; soon, between them and him, a small town showed itself—a church, some rows of houses, and the chimney of an engine-house. Passing these, the train slackened its speed, and then stopped with a jerk at a dwarfed disconsolate station. Here, amongst a group of farmers and earth-stained peasants, was a figure whose presence distinguished this station from all the others—the figure of a footman, having a red cockade in his hat, and a long well-made overcoat, bright with immense gilt buttons. In a moment Fritz appeared at the carriage-door, and Grenville knew the journey was all but ended.

Outside the gate were waiting a spruce-looking brougham and a high outlandish break, with some wild-eyed gipsies staring at them. Grenville was presently at home amongst the

civilized cushions of the former ; and the horses, at the sound of the whip, plunged forward impetuously. One incongruous sensation at once surprised and amused him, and that was the rocking and jolting of the eminently well-hung vehicle, which told a refreshing tale of the savage character of the road. In a few minutes a sharp turn was taken, and then he saw he was in the great poplar avenue. On each side was a deep irregular ditch, beyond were glimpses of tiled barns and cottages, and ahead of him in the distance, it seemed that the road was blocked by some vague masses of building, on which something or other glittered. In due time all this explained itself. The brougham was approaching a long buff-coloured wall, built of stone elaborately dressed, and enriched with cyphers at intervals ; and in the middle of this was a florid Italian gateway, high over which was lifted a gilded princely coronet. Some doors were opened ; a man in a green livery raised a hat adorned with plumes to the carriage ; barefooted women were visible, grubbing in unkept flower-beds ; then came

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shadow and echo, and the horses tramped under an archway ; they crossed a well-like court surrounded by walls and windows, and drew up under a second archway beyond. Here on a step was standing a majestic porter, with gold lace on his coat and a gold-headed sceptre in his hand. Through the door behind him was visible a great ascending staircase, on which were stationed several liveried servants, a wizened little dwarf, who might have been either sixteen or sixty, and a steward who would have done honour to any German melodrama, as he smiled and blinked a respectful benediction on the scene. Grenville feared for a moment that they would all of them be kissing his hand—an act which, though he approved of it in theory, would, he felt, be embarrassing in practice. As a matter of fact, however, they merely muttered something and bowed, and somehow or other between them conducted him up the staircase. This was not unlike the staircase of a palace at Genoa. There was the same spaciousness, the same fine proportions, though the stairs and balustrades

were of coarse stone, not marble, and the walls were rudely whitewashed. But a life-size portrait of Maria Theresa was on one side, a cardinal simpered superb benevolence on the other, and facing the landing was a wigged general under a canopy, turning a velvet shoulder to an army being massacred in the background. Grenville found at this point that the dwarf alone was conducting him. He was ushered through two bare ante-rooms, whose walls were dingy with pictures. A farther door was opened. He heard a voice that he recognized; and the Princess, full of smiles, was greeting him in a good-sized drawing-room. Here everything had an oddly familiar look—tables, carpet, and sofas. It all suggested England—only an England just robbed of its comfort. There was English comfort, however, in the sight of the tea-table ready for him; and he and the Princess were soon happily seated with nothing between them but a service of old Vienna china.

“You mustn’t be frightened,” she said, “at finding me alone. Some time next week there

will be a few people coming—Count C——, perhaps, who was once Ambassador in London; and a nice little niece of mine with two angels of children. To-night, too, at dinner, I have company for you in the shape of the priest. He talks nothing but Hungarian, so I must be his interpreter. Poor man—this will make his conversation go further than usual. I have taken you at your word, you see. You will have little here to amuse you but the things you told me you cared about, which, if I remember right, are the old, the dull, and the unaccustomed. Come,” she exclaimed, “there is still some light left. Open the window, and take a look outside.”

He did as she asked, and they emerged on the leaded roof of a portico. The scene was curious. Below was an enormous space, dotted with groups of servants, children, and poultry, which was enclosed by ranges of pillared and symmetrical out-buildings, and had in the middle a grass-plot, encircling a monumental obelisk. Directly opposite was an entrance guarded by two great statues; and beyond

these was the poplar avenue, whose slim vista reached away into the twilight.

“That avenue,” said the Princess, “was made by my husband’s grandfather, to form a link between two distant properties. On that side it goes for more than sixty miles, and sixteen on the other, by which you came from the station ; and this castle is stuck on it like a piece of meat on a skewer. On the right is our town—you would call it a village ; on the other the park, into which your bedroom looks ; and north and south are our woods and plains and poplars. That great building is a riding-school ; its fellow that faces it is a ball-room ; and those two things like temples on each side of the entrance—coachmen and gardeners live now in them ; but forty years back they were the barracks of a guard of honour. Yes,” she said, looking at him with an amused twinkle in her eyes, “we have only just ceased to be interesting savages. I hope you’ll discover to-morrow that we’re not quite civilized yet. Look,” she went on, raising her glasses to her eyes. The gates had opened.



A carriage with four rough horses wheeled in, and drew up at a distant door. "That," said the Princess, "must be our architect and our agent. They went this morning to a village nearly thirty miles away. Hark! there's the bell, which means it is half-past six. We dine at seven. I will have you shown to your room. Don't dress; put on merely a morning coat; and listen—one piece of advice; take your hat with you, and wear it in these cold passages."

The dwarf, who was found in the ante-room, and who seemed a kind of groom-of-the-chambers, actually had Grenville's hat ready for him; and guiding him down the stairs to a vaulted corridor on an entresol, landed him at last in a bedroom that was vaulted also, though the curves of the roof, as well as the walls, were incongruously covered with a gaudy but faded paper. Having made the toilette enjoined him, Grenville retraced his steps, and found the Princess and the priest already awaiting him in the drawing-room. The priest rose deferentially and, with both hands on his



stomach, made a bend of the body towards him which obviously aimed at being a bow. The Princess rattled through a bilingual introduction, and then said, "Take your hats, and let us come in to dinner." They passed out through the ante-room, across the head of the staircase, and presently reached a large circular chamber, rudely frescoed, so as to look like a ruinous temple, with a broken dome for its roof, and fern sprouting out of its walls.

Compared with an English dinner the repast was primitively simple. The dishes were few, and each was presented twice; there was nothing on the table but a dish of pears, and biscuits; and there was one wine only—a red wine of the country. To Grenville, fresh from the luxuries of Vienna and London, all this seemed like a happy retrogression into shadow-land; and the number of clumsily reverential servants who shuffled round so bare a board deepened this vague impression. A mere accident deepened it yet further. The Princess worked industriously as interpreter between the priest and Grenville; but presently Gren-

ville, feeling that he cut rather a helpless figure, asked if the priest was able to talk Latin. The good man's face at once lighted up, and a smile widened the curve of his smooth overflowing cheeks. With his knife arrested an inch in front of his mouth, he emitted first a cough, and then a few halting words, which Grenville barely recognized through their unaccustomed pronunciation, but to which, however, he bravely responded by some others, imitating as well as he could the pronunciation of his neighbour. In the course of a few minutes the two began just to understand each other. As time went on they got more shameless and confident, and gradually casting to the winds all reverence for grammatical virtue, they became intelligible as they ceased to attempt correctness. The Princess was delighted. She asked in Hungarian and English what they were saying, and by and by she was informed that they had got on the subject of the castle. The castle to the priest was the most magnificent object in the universe; and he evidently felt a kind of

personal pride in recounting to a stranger all the wonders contained in it. Moreover as this kind of catalogue obviated the necessity for verbs, he continued it in the drawing-room till the early hour arrived for him and his cassock to bow themselves out and vanish. “*Theatrum—scena—proscenium—*” these were some of the echoes left by him in his listener’s ears—“*arma cum multis gemmis—arma antiquissima—documenta—libri—medii ævi reliquiæ—mirabilia multa—per-multa—admiranda! Sylvæ—cervi—latifundia prodigiosa.*”

## CHAPTER VI.

THE expectations which Grenville took that night to bed with him were well fulfilled by his experience the following week ; nor did he, although he had no company but his hostess, feel so much as an hour of dulness or disappointment. New impressions were invading him every moment, delighting and exhilarating his imagination, and surprising him all the more from the way in which they answered his expectations.

He woke next morning, under the vaulted roof of his chamber, to find his coffee at his bedside in exquisite old pink china. When he was dressing, he looked out on the park with its giant trees, and saw how it was planted

after the stately fashion of Versailles, in long alleys that radiated from an open space in the centre. He threw his windows wide, and there came an influx of air which had all the warmth of summer and all the freshness of spring; and he stole out early down a narrow winding staircase, and wandered at will amongst the huge trunks and primroses, treading on moss, and watching the roofs and outlines of the castle.

Every morning he did the same, moving about like a solitary human being in fairy-land. Wherever he turned was something with the stamp of the old *régime* on it. There was a long orangery built in the seventeenth century; a kitchen-garden with forcing-houses hardly later in date; and as to the castle itself, its newest parts or features—the great courtyard which was meant to be grandly classical—some Corinthian pilasters stuck against mediæval walls, and some Italian vases stuck on mediæval parapets—these were the work of a lady, not a Princess Plekonitz, whom a Prince Plekonitz had imported here from

the court of Louis Quatorze. Grenville each morning saw them all, with the dew on them ; whilst on every side of him the innumerable buds of spring swelled and brightened into one growing illumination of green.

Then, too, within-doors, a whole world unfolded its secrets—rooms that were dim with pictures of wars on the Turkish borders, of falling flags with the crescent on them, and savage turbaned heads being severed by Hungarian sabres. He peeped into the ball-room of which the Princess had spoken, and was surprised at its deserted splendour. It was a hundred feet in length—a hall with a frescoed roof, which rested on marble columns, and had rows of chandeliers dangling from it. The old steward lured him up many dusty stairs, and introduced him to a veritable museum hidden in the topmost story. Here were whitewashed walls, festooned with jewelled saddle-cloths of crimson and green velvet—the plunder of Moslem camps. In one room were antique saddles, of which some had emeralds in their stirrups ; in another was

battered armour, and great rusty lances ; in another matchlocks and models of old artillery ; and in another a pile of faded Turkish pavilions. Then, again, under rafters that smelt of cobwebs, were worm-eaten presses whose contents exhaled a different sentiment—dies for money, which the princes once had the right of coining ; toys of forgotten children ; rapiers with tarnished handles, rouge-pots, velvet masks, and fragments of broken fans—withered petals of the gaiety of a lost century. Nor was this all. There were ponderous quaint portmanteaus, which had rumbled their last on wheels before the French Revolution ; a chest with a service in it of metal plates and dishes, for the use of some prince when he halted at wayside inns—objects which whispered of coaches with blazoned panels, armed retinues, and long robber-haunted roads. Nor was the priest's boast a vain one when he spoke of old documents, and of a theatre. There was in the basement a series of vaulted chambers, stacked with papers and parchments, like trusses of brown hay,



which made Grenville feel as if all the past were breathing at him ; and above the drawing-room was a high saloon full of silence, where a regular stage stood with all its scenery, in the same condition as when actors had last trodden it, on a certain gay festival ninety years ago.

He had little temptation at first to wander beyond the precincts, the castle and its grounds offering quite enough to amuse him ; but occasional glimpses which he caught of the outer world made a fitting frame for the things with which he had grown familiar. The windows of the library commanded the square of the little town, which the second day of his visit was thronged with a many-coloured fair, the whole area being tessellated with the costumes of peasants and gipsies. A day or two later he saw the same open space perambulated by a procession bearing tapers, crosses, and censers, and led by chanting priests, whose vestments twinkled in the daylight ; and beyond the fences of the park he gradually came to realize that there were plains where

buffaloes fed, and wandering flocks of sheep—sheep with shepherds playing on pastoral pipes to them.

The Princess, who had lived so long in her adopted country that anything strange about it had by this time worn away, began to feel, when her guest described his impressions to her, that she saw it with fresh eyes again, and her interest in it was revived by his. The warmth of the nights—warm like an English June—would charm them after dinner away from the lighted drawing-room, and keep them outside, sitting on the roof of the portico, whilst the Princess poured into his ears accounts of the life surrounding them—telling him of the robbers that still haunted the country, hiding themselves in the enormous forests; of castles on plain and crag, and the ghosts and legends belonging to them; of the shameless tyrannies of some of the smaller rural magnates, of the almost royal isolation of the more important families, of their tapestried halls, their innumerable horses, their boar-hunts, and their wild foresters; and

sometimes she alluded to a possession of the house of Plekonitz, which she said that Grenville ought by and by to see—a half-ruined castle on a rock, not sixteen miles away, with quarters in it for a thousand troops, with endless subterranean galleries, with towers full of old portraits, hangings, and crystal goblets; and with a guard-room arched like a cathedral, called “The Hall of the Cannon.” And meanwhile, from a tavern beyond the lodge, would float with a dreamy wildness the music of a gipsy band; the moon, rising above the blossoming horse-chestnuts of the park, would make in their branches a mist of milky lamp-light, and out of the thickets beyond would thrill the first notes of the nightingale.

But at last came a day of rain; and then Grenville betook himself to a region which as yet he had quite neglected—the library. The bulk of the books were French—books of the last century, and many of them were extremely curious. There were quaint guides to old-world watering-places; quaint treatises on

old-world household economy; and others, without number, on building, containing plans and pictures of mansions in the Faubourg St. Germain, and of châteaux in the days of their glory. In addition to these he found a collection of tall folios, which were full of superb engravings, illustrating, in the most minute way, the life of Paris and Vienna, from the street to the royal bedroom.

These the Princess had never seen before, and her pleasure knew no bounds. She and Grenville, before they went to bed, would spend an hour in turning them over like children. Brilliant balls, banquets, and royal card-parties, fanciful out-door *fêtes*, hunting scenes, and processions, all drawn from life with the most exact minuteness, were revealed before them on the splendid unwieldy pages. The gilded chariots seem to rattle as they looked at them, the flowers to be sprouting in the alleys of the grandiose gardens, and they heard on the towering hedges the clink of the gardener's shears. But Grenville at last discovered something better even than

this. It was a little oblong volume in tattered and dirty calf, which he chanced to unearth, and opened with very faint curiosity. But when he opened it he found it the identical thing which he had wished for secretly, without imagining it existed. It was a collection of engravings published two hundred years ago, of the castles of Hungary and Styria, showing them as they then were. The superb folios at once ceased to interest him, and his imagination gave itself entirely to these strange romantic dwellings. Some were perched on curious rocks like birds' nests, some hung with their turrets over little clustering villages, some stood in great woodlands, solitary. But all had the same peculiar air about them, distinct from anything known to Western Europe. They were all of them mansions or palaces incorporated with the feudal stronghold, not as if this last were the work of a dead antiquity, but as being obviously a part of the real life of the time. There were Italian gardens hidden behind cannon and watch-towers, Italian gateways

flanked by walls loopholed for musketry, and travelling carriages issuing out under the teeth of the raised portcullis.

And now came the question, where were these castles situated? And which of them, if any, could Grenville manage to visit? The Princess understood his enthusiasm, but she could give him little information. She accordingly sent for the agent; she submitted the book to him, and catechized him carefully as to its contents. Of many of the castles he naturally knew nothing; but a dozen or more, belonging to the adjacent region, he at once identified, and could say something about them. Several of these he knew to be complete ruins, but three or four of them—and they happened to be amongst the most singular—he said were standing much as the pictures showed them, and he engaged to find out how they might best be visited.

One excursion, indeed, was arranged at once, and that was to the castle of which the Princess had herself spoken. A light carriage and four were put at Grenville's dis-



posal. Early one morning the horses stamped under the archway, the porter in his gold lace and his robes superintended the start, and past the lodges, and beneath the glittering coronet, Grenville sped away into the level limitless landscape, inhaling the smell and freshness of the half-oriental spring. He came back in the evening enchanted with what he had seen. Everything—at all events so it seemed to him—had realized the dreams with which the Princess and the book had been filling him—the peasants who lifted their shaggy caps to him as he passed, the forests through which the road had taken him, where gipsy bands camped in clearings, and where wood-cutters on the borders of the shadow were busy over the raw red timber, the absence of anything like a modern middle-class dwelling, and above all the appearance of the villages, had spoken of a primitive world, lost to Western Europe—a world picturesque with all its old inequalities unquestioned, in which, if the rich had changed as little as the poor, he would himself have been



driving in a chariot, and been wearing ruffles and a periwig. As for the village at the foot of the castle he was bound for, it was still surrounded by its old fortified walls, and one side of its square was occupied by a barn-like monastery; whilst the castle above, whose ragged walls looked down on it, was reached by a line of ascending towers and guard-rooms, where the iron doors still swung in the shadow; and Grenville had found, in its wilderness of half-roofless masonry, not only the bric-à-brac of which the Princess had spoken, but a great banqueting-hall high over a lofty chapel; and in it its old oak table, surrounded by carved chairs, sideboards adorned with trays of dim oriental lacquer, and breast-plates and rusty helmets looking down on it all.

“I should hardly have been surprised,” he said that evening to the Princess, “if Frederick Barbarossa or King Arthur had been sitting at that table with their followers.”

“Well,” said the Princess, “I am glad you have enjoyed yourself; and now I have got a

piece of good news with which to welcome you. The agent has been with me to-day, and has arranged two more expeditions for you—to castles as large as this one, and, he says, not ruined at all. To see them, however, you must sleep for a couple of nights at a little town about thirty miles away. So as one or two people are coming here almost directly, you had better, perhaps, calm your impatience, and wait until they are gone. Remember,” she added, “there are my little grand-nieces and their mother. For my sake you must stay and admire these. And then, as I told you before, there will also be Count C——. He knows Hungary thoroughly, and he was for some years at Constantinople : so for every reason you ought to be here to meet him.”

“Nothing,” said Grenville, “could please me or suit me better. A parcel of letters, I find, has come to me from Vienna. They will want a good deal of answering, and I shall be glad of a few days’ quiet.”

## CHAPTER VII.

GRENVILLE's letters were indeed a formidable budget ; and when, during the next few days, he set himself to consider and answer them, he found himself troubled by misgivings which he certainly had not anticipated. Most of the letters dealt with official business, or political matters connected with it : and, regard being had to the character of the ministers who wrote them, the tone of them all, even more than the matter, was flattering. Some of them especially were so plain-spoken and confidential, that Grenville's cheek, as he read, grew warm with a pulse of vanity, and his heart throbbed with the sense that he was really a rising man. But yet, as he sat in the window of his vaulted bed-room, writing his

lucid answers to them, and feeling his power in doing so, he was aware that his mind was less in his work than formerly. The thought of his strange surroundings would be continually coming to him, like boys' thoughts of their holidays disturbing them at their Greek declensions, and would touch his nerves as a perfume might—a delightful consciousness of the castle with its ancient passages, of the Turkish spoils, the rouge-pots, the velvet masks—of the primitive villages, the forests and the great pastoral plains: and they seemed to whisper of a life on which he had turned his back. All appealed to him like a wild breath of romance; and romance showed itself as a more attractive thing than reality. In fact he now understood, for the first time fully, the degree to which his present existence had touched and stirred his imagination, and how susceptible he still was to the power of that magical faculty. In itself the experience was a delightful one; but as he thought it over, it began to alarm and trouble him.

“Am I,” he asked himself, “merely a

dreamer after all? And am I tiring of practical work before I have well begun it? Romance, and philosophy, which is merely the romance of the intellect—I was useless for so many years because I gave myself up to these. They made me expect everything, and consequently do nothing. Is this one of these Sirens once again tempting me, calling me away from the narrow path of achievement, into the wide land of enchantment, the paradise of possibilities? To have a strong will one must have a narrow imagination. Is *my* imagination once more making a fool of me?"

Reflection, however, ended in reassuring him; and having first confided to his diary the general character of his doubts, with a half-cynical laugh he formulated his answers to them as follows—

"No," he wrote, "when I come to think it over dispassionately, all the romance which this country suggests to me—all the futile dreaming which gives me so much pleasure, does not weaken my practical resolution to

work, but rather stimulates it ; and, to speak the bald and simple truth, I believe the reason to be this. All work in the world, except religious work, amongst its motives always has ambition for one of them ; and if any one says this is not true in his own case, it merely means that his ambition is a kind of ambition he is ashamed of. Now ambition is essentially an appreciation of some prize that the world can give one ; and that prize, in every case, no matter how its true character may be hidden, and how much we may disguise it from ourselves, is some position securing for us some exceptional social tribute, either of submission, welcome, or hostility. This is the crown of wild-olive, which even the race for money is ran for ; and the vulgarest of ambitious men values money only for the sake of it. Well, such being the case, my own feeling is this—it is only when the constitution of society is openly and avowedly aristocratic that ambition can be gentlemanly or even honest ; and under such conditions it is enlarged, chastened and ennobled by being shared

with a family or with a class. But an ambitious democrat is bound to achieve his elevation by making a trade of saying that he does not wish to be elevated. And then, when he does achieve it, what a ridiculous elevation it is! The aristocrat has a position which asserts his greatness for him; the democrat is a social monstrosity who has always to be asserting it for himself. He is like a man who, instead of having his wealth in lands and dependants, is bound to carry and exhibit it on his own person; or he is like a man chaired by a mob, and every moment in danger of being upset by it: whilst a really noble position is not elevation merely; it is as composite and special a thing as a really noble picture. But in this country, it seems, there are neither mobs nor democrats. This castle, were it in England, would no doubt seem rude and uncomfortable; but its towers, and its courts, have here no other dwellings which can rival them, or confuse their meaning by belonging to a different class of owners. And it is just in the same



way here that the spirit of aristocracy survives, not really perhaps with more vigour than in England, but with nothing, so far as a stranger sees, to question it. One feels it here as one does not feel it there; it restores to life a lost picturesqueness and brilliance; it makes the mountains grander, the valleys more peaceful, and the world it makes a place that seems better worth succeeding in. I laugh," he added, "to think of how many excellent people would exclaim against this view, and call it the 'quintessence of vulgarity.' Poor excellent people! Let them call it what they will. It is merely a question of names. Vulgarity is their name for what wounds their own self-love."

If these feelings were strong when he wrote them down—and they were strong no matter how he laughed at them—they were destined the following day to be strengthened still further. The Princess, when Grenville met her at luncheon, struck him at once as not being quite herself. Her manner had a sort of constraint and importance in it which he

had never before noticed. Presently she came out with the following piece of information—that the Count and Countess were coming that afternoon. “Irma Schilizzi,” she added, “has put me off till to-morrow.” Then with a voice that suddenly became sharp, as if she were impressing some severe fact on her listener, “The Count and Countess,” she said, “as of course you know, are amongst the greatest—the very greatest—people in Vienna. It’s a pity they were in London before your time, and that therefore you do not know them.”

What all this meant Grenville could not at first imagine, but presently he got at the bottom of it.

“The Count and I,” continued the Princess, “are very old friends. We always get on famously. As for her—well, her manners can be charming, when she likes. I must say that for all the Austrian great ladies; and here of course she’ll be civil. But——” The Princess paused.

“Yes,” said Grenville. “But what?”

The Princess gave a little ironical laugh.

“ You don’t know Vienna,” she said, “ I do. Listen to me, Bobby Grenville, and I’ll tell you what will perhaps amuse you. You see what I am—the widow of the greatest magnate in Hungary ; and foreigner though I am, I can tell you that at Buda-Pesth I am as great a lady as any one. Perhaps I am even the greatest. But at Vienna I shouldn’t be so much as received in society. And yet, think of this. My mother belonged to one of the oldest families in England ; and her mother was the daughter of an English duke. But my father and his father happened to be brewers at Liverpool—only merchant princes, and great Liberal statesmen ; and at Vienna, I tell you without exaggeration, I should be nobody—nobody—nobody ! These Austrian countesses and princesses— However, there’s no use talking about it. As you didn’t know this one in London, see how she treats *you*. I never knew till this morning that there was any question of her coming ; but it seems she’s on her way to some place, so she makes this house a convenience.”

Grenville saw that this subject was a sore one with her, though she herself had started it; so he said abruptly, by way of turning the conversation—

“And who is Irma Schilizzi, who you said is coming to-morrow?”

“My niece—my niece,” said the Princess, a little impatiently. “I suppose I am stupid, and didn’t tell you her name. There is a case in point. She lives in Vienna sometimes. Her husband has business there. He is one of a firm of engineers. He is very rich; he has done some great works for the Emperor; and so his name is perfectly well known. Now as for getting into Viennese society, my niece would as soon think of trying to get to the moon. But to her the Countess will be not only civil but charming. She considers the distance between them to be so immense and acknowledged, that she will be almost as nice to her as she might be to a favourite maid. These people—I tell you you’ll be able to see it for yourself—can be charming to those whom they acknowledge their equals, and also

to those who acknowledge themselves their inferiors; but to others, their insolence is something which an Englishman could hardly believe in; though to a vulgar fine lady in London it would be a fortune, if only she could imitate it. And it's all the more insolent because they seem to be unaware of it. Not that I care," added the Princess, with true feminine veracity. "Perhaps she'll amuse you. She's handsome, but very stupid."

One of the Princess's observations slightly annoyed Grenville. The Countess might have a contempt for brewers and brewers' children; but he saw no reason why he should be classed along with them. He was happy in the consciousness of possessing thirty-two unimpeachable quarterings; and in his own estimation his blood was as pure as the Countess's own. But in spite of this, or perhaps because of it, what the Princess had said raised in him some misgiving as to whether the Countess would take him at his true value; and his vanity began to annoy him with various imagined ways in which she might

place him in a false position and humiliate him.

This formidable lady and her husband arrived about five o'clock. Entering the drawing-room Grenville found them at tea; and after all he had heard, he watched them with some interest. The Count, a handsome man who looked about sixty-five, with his frank expression and carefully-trimmed beard, had all the air and manner of a high-bred fashionable Englishman. The Countess was a slim woman, who had many remains of beauty, and evidently a Parisian maid; and she was prattling to the Princess with all the lightness of a girl, in a quick alternation of German, French, and English.

The Count, when Grenville was introduced, greeted him with the greatest cordiality. For that indeed he was prepared; but the greeting of the Countess was a surprise to him. She turned towards him with a bright twinkle of welcome, which seemed to gleam on him from her eyes, her lips, and her bracelets.

"Mr. Grenville," she said, in the prettiest



foreign accent, "I didn't know we were going to find you here. We were so sorry, the Count and I, not to have met you at Vienna. Dear Princess, let Mr. Grenville sit by me. Perhaps you'll allow him just to move the tea-table."

Grenville experienced two conflicting emotions. He would hardly have been human if he had not felt somewhat flattered at being distinguished thus by a lady whom he had been told he would find so *difficile*. But another emotion, which he was far more keenly conscious of, was annoyance for the sake of the Princess, who he felt, in spite of her kindness, would be mortified for several reasons at this falsification of her prophecies. He honestly wished that the Countess would begin to be rude to him; he did as little as possible to meet her friendly advances; and he carefully kept from looking towards the Princess, for fear she should think he was asking her to remark his conquest. By and by, however, the Countess suddenly said to him, "And, Mr. Grenville, how beautiful they are, those poems



of yours ! Your Ambassador lent them to me. I think there is real passion in them." Grenville's eyes, in modesty, wandered away from the speaker, and they fell by accident full on those of the Princess. He was puzzled by seeing in these no signs of annoyance, but a knowing smile which said to him, "Isn't it as I told you ?" What she could mean by this he was quite unable to conjecture ; but the moment the Count and Countess were taken to see their bedrooms, she explained it by saying to him with a little friendly malice, "Don't you notice how she takes you for a man of letters, and patronizes you ?"

"Well," said Grenville, with a really generous effort, "perhaps she does. I confess I did feel patronized."

The Princess laughed, delighted, and rubbed her hands together. "Ah," she said, "didn't I tell you so ? That's Vienna all over."

Grenville, though uneasily wondering whether the Princess might not be right, was pleased to think that the mischief, which he had been fearing, was got rid of ; but, as fate

would have it, at dinner it all began again. The conversation turned at first on various royal marriages, and then on the general gossip of half the courts of Europe. Nothing in the world could have suited the Princess better. Of Rome and St. Petersburg she knew far more than the Countess, and despite her opinion of the Austrian *haute noblesse*, she had the *Almanach de Gotha* well at her fingers' ends. Then presently, when the Countess, who loved jewellery like a child, said to her, "Oh, *mon Dieu*, what a beautiful brooch that is of yours!" she achieved a genuine triumph in being able to answer thus: "The Queen of England gave it me. She was fond of me for the sake of my grandmother."

"Yes," said the Count to his wife, anxious to make things pleasant, "the Princess was always a great favourite with the Queen."

"I know England so little," said the Countess, turning to Grenville, and dropping the subject of her hostess's royal friendship, as if putting down a piece of china that had been put into her hands unasked. "I only

married my husband during his last year in London. I stayed one autumn, however, at several of your beautiful châteaux. Compared with you English, we poor people are barbarous."

"On the contrary," said Grenville, "I hear your châteaux are splendid. Country life in Austria has always particularly interested me."

The Princess, imagining that Grenville was still feeling patronized, was anxious now to speak up for her guest's dignity.

"Mr. Grenville," she interposed, "has a beautiful château of his own."

"Ah," said the Countess, laughing gaily, "to be sure he has. We have been there; we have seen it. We were staying with Lord Solway, close by, and he drove us through the enchanting park. You don't live there? No? I was told it was let to some rich *bourgeois*. But we went in. We saw your old family pictures. There were rooms—galleries—full of them. So, Mr. Grenville, you find we know all about you; and your Ambassador said at Vienna that you will be such a great man.

"You ought to be great," she went on, with an almost coquettish friendliness. "I am not laughing—no. It is written in your eyes—I am a physiognomist."

Grenville felt that the Princess was taking in every word; but later in the evening he hoped she was out of hearing, when the Count, who treated him with equally marked distinction, offered to give him this and that introduction to obnoxious grandees, the despisers of brewers' daughters, in case he should really wish to see country life in Austria. The Princess, however, had managed to hear everything; but her nature was really far too genial and dignified to allow her to harbour any petty sense of annoyance; and she only indulged in the solace which an angel could hardly have grudged her, of trying to make it appear that everything had happened as she predicted.

"Did you notice," she said, "they treat you as one of themselves? You see the reason; they happen to know your pedigree—I dare say better than you know it yourself.

Isn't it just as I told you? Only I didn't think it would come out so soon. Well, the Countess is satisfied that your blood is blue. She never forgets that mine has malt and hops in it."

"My dear Princess," said Grenville, "I'm sure you are wrong there. This lady seems to me to treat you as her intimate friend."

"Pooh!" retorted the Princess, laughing, as she said good-night to him. "Civility with many fine ladies is merely the grammar of impertinence."

The whole of these incidents, though in some ways they flattered Grenville, yet in others jarred on him unpleasantly. He was genuinely sorry for his hostess on account of the sense of indignity from which he knew she was suffering, and with which he could sympathize, as at first he had been apprehensive that he might have to share it himself; but he was annoyed with her at the same time for having confided her grievance to him. It was a grievance which seemed so unsuited to this remote princely castle, and the stately

and old-world life which he liked to think survived in it. It disturbed his pleasant illusions, as a noise might disturb a dream.

In this mood of mind the society of the Count and Countess gave him a pleasure, by contrast, which he could not help feeling, but for which he reproached himself, as if it savoured of treachery. They, in every way, suited the castle absolutely. What the castle was to the country, they were to life. The position which they instinctively assigned to themselves suggested no invidious comparison with mere ordinary mortals; it seemed based on the assumption that there could be no comparison at all. And the result was, to Grenville, charming. There was a soothing calm about them, especially about their social judgments, which said that for them a social grievance would be impossible; and further, they showed not only perfect taste, but the kindness that comes to people for whom acrimony could never be a necessity. In the Count, too, he noticed a certain chivalrous discrimination, even with regard to the Princess's

niece—a mere *bourgeoise*—the wife of an engineer.

“We met her here last year,” he said; “a pretty refined woman.”

“Yes,” said the Countess, carelessly, “her mother, I think, was noble.”

“You would quite get the impression,” the Count continued to Grenville, “that she had made a *mésalliance* in marrying this Schilizzi—a Levantine. But he’s rich. In Vienna alone he must have made a large fortune, and the Princess told me he had a grand villa at Hampstead; so perhaps by this time in London he’s a man of fashion and a courtier.”

In these last words was a dryness that spoke volumes. Shortly afterwards the Countess, with a pleasant smile, happened to say of the Princess, “So clever, so nice, so good she is.”

These words spoke their volumes also. Grenville now detected the note of instinctive patronage, and was certainly glad that he was not himself its victim. The sense that he was not—the sense that these two fastidious aristocrats, whilst patronizing others, saw in



himself an equal, had not only saved him from an anticipated mortification, but was now giving him, in his own eyes, a certain increased importance; the very nature of which he would hardly have understood at home, or which at home he would certainly have thought ridiculous. He was indeed conscious of something ridiculous in it, even here; but for reasons which will be dwelt on presently, he yielded to it—he could not resist it.

Presently, however, an incident happened which, though it did not change his mind, made him reproach, and even despise himself for indulging it. Mme. Schilizzi arrived—a pretty, clear-eyed blonde, somewhat timid in manner, but perfectly well-bred; graceful in figure, and almost too beautifully dressed. Grenville was by instinct always attentive to women, even to those who appealed to nothing beyond his kindness. And here was a woman to whom, under other circumstances, he would certainly have found it pleasant to pay some common attention. Indeed he did attend to her, as it was; he did his duty conscientiously—seating

himself by her when he was introduced to her, and talking to her about her journey. But all the while he felt the Count and Countess had lent their supercilious vision to him; and his eyes persisted in seeing in her not a pleasing acquaintance, but merely the *bourgeois*' wife—a person beyond the pale of intimacy. Nor were matters mended when at dinner she shyly spoke to him about London, and he found that her ideas were confined to Hampstead and Bayswater; though seeing how conscious she was of the narrowness of her own experience, he was a little touched by the simplicity with which she acknowledged it. He knew when, that night, he reflected on how he had behaved to her—he knew that externally he had shown her no want of politeness; but to talk to her had been an effort, and he despised himself for the feeling that made it so.

And yet the feeling perversely refused to vanish; and indeed next morning it inclined rather to confirm itself. The Princess was occupied with her matters of daily business.

Mrs. Schilizzi had retired to the company of her children, and the Count and Countess invited him to come for a walk with them in the park. He felt as he went—their manner subtly made him feel—as if there were between them some unmentioned social free-masonry, separating them from others near them ; and no public adulation could have flattered him so much as this silent understanding. They tried to give him every information he asked for ; they renewed their offers of various useful introductions, especially one to Count T——, a great territorial magnate, who lived in the neighbourhood of the castle he was about to visit ; and thinking over their charm of manner, their kindness, and their perfect taste, and realizing that their pride was a dagger which they kept in a velvet sheath, and would never draw unless some one ventured to attack them, he said to himself that a pride which he shared with them could not after all be so very absurd or vulgar.

In the afternoon they departed. The Princess, when she had seen the last of them,

asked Grenville to join with her in her relief at being rid of the lady ; and calling the children and her niece to her, began to laugh and talk with them, as if a weight had been lifted from her mind suddenly. He, however, was conscious of a certain blankness. He had a feeling as if his natural allies had deserted him, and had left him in a position more or less false amongst strangers. But his spirits revived when the Princess, with great good-humour, returned during dinner to the subject of his proposed expeditions, and arranged that he should start as soon as he felt inclined. "Irma," she said, "goes in a week or so ; she is waiting to hear from her doctor about a little watering-place between this and Budapesth, to which she wishes to take her children. They are both delicate ; neither Vienna nor this place suits them. Had your two ways only lain in the same direction, you might have waited and taken charge of her."

Grenville was not sorry that this plan was impracticable. He had lost his sense of happiness in the castle ; and that evening he wrote

as follows in his diary—"The whole plan of my expedition has been settled. On Thursday next I will start. The change has come just when it was most wanted. The grievances of my kind friend the Princess against Viennese society, and the talk and the smart dresses of the young grass-widow from Hampstead, whose husband it seems is at Smyrna making a railway, were beginning to interfere with the charm which this place had for me—to interfere with it before I had half realized it. But all will be set to rights by a few days of isolation.

"By the way, I ought to be highly pleased with myself. I find I am famous. To my surprise Mrs. Schilizzi has read my poetry. She told me so this evening. I was not very responsive. I hope she will not embarrass me by praising me to my face again."

With regard to this point he need have been under no uneasiness. Mrs. Schilizzi, as any one might have seen who watched her, was far too sensitively timid to risk a second repulse ; and though not showing the smallest

pique at his treatment, she was shy in his presence, and showed some difficulty in talking to him. He again blamed himself for the perversity of his previous temper. Here he was shut up with two women, and he could not feel or act quite as he wished towards either. He hated to feel himself an unsympathizing critic of his hostess, and a supercilious critic of her niece, whom he gradually saw to be prettier than at first he thought she was. Her eyes would have pleased Greuze; her dresses would have pleased Worth; her complexion would have pleased anybody. But he could not help measuring her by the Countess's Viennese standard; he felt her not to belong to the same world as himself; and the signs of refinement and thought in her by which he was sometimes struck, merely surprised, and did nothing toward attracting, him.

The very next morning for instance, when he was turning over some books in the library, she happened to enter without at first seeing him, and with obvious curiosity began to



inspect the shelves. Grenville's only thought was, "What on earth can she want here?" The moment she saw him she started and blushed crimson.

"I'm so sorry," she said; "I didn't mean to disturb you."

She certainly did disturb him; but, seeing that she turned to go, the whole of his good-nature was up in arms to reassure her.

"Can I," he said kindly, "help you to look for anything? There's nothing here I'm afraid that's very new or amusing."

"I like old books," she faltered, "though I dare say I don't understand them. What I wanted to look at was the castles you showed the Princess."

Grenville produced the volume, and turned over the leaves with her. She seemed unnecessarily grateful for his politeness, and was profuse in her exclamations of interest. The exclamations annoyed him, and he asked her, by way of checking them, if, connected as she was with the country, she had seen any of these places herself.



“No,” she said. “My mother was Hungarian; but this house and Vienna are nearly all I know of Europe. I have never seen anything. Please don’t let me disturb you.”

This annoyed him also—the constant tone of apology. He remained with her dutifully till they had come to the last picture; and then with a feeling of relief he escaped to his own bedroom.

“What a difference,” he repeated, “between a woman like that and the Countess! The Countess is fifty if she is a day, and never at her best would have been as pretty as Mrs. Schilizzi. But how much more important in point of merely womanly attractiveness is perfection of bearing than beauty of face or form! The Countess has the power of beauty; the other has merely the fact of it. The great quality which high-breeding gives to a woman is self-confidence without self-consciousness; for it is a confidence based not on the amount she has seen of life, but on the position from which she sees it: and a girl may have it just as much as a woman. Take for instance

Lady Evelyn Standish. She is as innocent of any doubt as to the position from which she sees life, as she is innocent of any knowledge of evil. There is therefore a self-possession underlying even her shyness; for she is never afraid of being natural. The essence of high-breeding is to be perfectly natural under the most artificial circumstances."

As he was piecing these thoughts together, he looked out on the park, and there he saw the woman whom he had thus been obliquely criticizing. She was with her children under the flickering boughs of the horse-chestnut trees. Her dress was creamy brown, with a hat trimmed to match it; their little frocks were red, making them look like anemones. She was dancing to amuse them, with some graceful subdued movement. The sunlight fell on them all through the young expanding leaves; and the group of figures arrested him by its mere charm as a picture. Then its meaning came to his heart and touched him. Feeling seemed to be glancing there under the green shadow. "There," he said to himself,

as he stood watching it, "there, I admit, is a perfect piece of nature. Could that woman be as natural with the world as she is with her children, no doubt I should think her charming. Even as it is," he continued, mentally, "she is quite pretty enough to suggest one satisfactory thought to me: and that is the thought of how completely the time is past when a woman's prettiness could ever really disturb me."

Turning from the window, he took out of a small writing-case the photograph of a young girl, with a well-poised head, and eyes that looked with a sort of composed eagerness. "I, dear Evelyn," he murmured, "if ever your love is mine, I shall never be disturbed by *you*; and you—God help me—shall never be disturbed by *me*."

Lady Evelyn Standish, however, not being an inmate of the castle, he had no present opportunity of showing how amiable he could be to her; and as to the feelings which were practically uppermost in his mind, many judges would have condemned them,

not with severity only, but contempt. But be that as it may, under the circumstances they were not unnatural; and if he had been put on his trial, there was much he might have pleaded in his favour. Unless all pride of lineage is to be considered unworthy or ridiculous, Grenville's pride had been by no means of a ridiculous kind. Like other members, indeed, of fallen and impoverished families, he had perhaps cherished it with a somewhat keener consciousness than many men do, with even greater apparent grounds for it, simply because fortune had left him so little else to cherish. And as a boy the feeling with him, no doubt, had been absurdly disproportionate, though then it had been a form of poetry, quite as much as of pride: but in seeing more of the world he had quietly learnt its lesson. His instinctive social fastidiousness remained with him, but he never obtruded it; common sense and a kind heart together tempered it with happy inconsistencies; whilst still believing himself, in the world of fashionable plutocracy, to be

better than many of those who now had that world at their feet, he moderated his expectations and accepted his position philosophically; and without relinquishing his belief, learnt more or less to forget it. But now, just as his worldly prospects were brightening, accident had thrown him into a society where mere lineage was still of value, and where all the prejudices which had been dear to him as a dreaming boy were openly avowed and acted on by wide-awake men and women. And by accident also, without any title to explain this, the purity and nobility of his own lineage had been recognized; and he, whom the wives of speculators and peers of yesterday often forgot to bid to their gorgeous ball-rooms, here met with a welcome of which those exclusive ladies would have had as likely a chance as Dives had of heaven. It is easy to laugh at him for what he felt; but this experience stimulated him like some elixir, and he wrote in his diary—"Lady Ashford was a wise woman. Her phrase was perfectly accurate. It seems to me as if my

life were beginning to rise on wings." He wrote this under the impulse of something beyond mere gratified vanity. He felt his ambition becoming stronger and more virile; his boy's confidence came back to him that some great position was his right; he felt that he would dignify it as well as be dignified by it. He thought of the *Almanach de Gotha*, and the families, not royal, which were included in it. Visions filled his mind of his own hereditary home; and it seemed to him that but two things were wanting—the fame he was going to win, and the future which his grandfather had lost—to place him on an equality with the proudest subjects of Europe. This may have been foolish dreaming, but it was not dreaming that was idle. It braced his practical resolution, and fevered him with a sanguine worldliness.

But though this mental condition had the results mentioned, making him annoyed with his hostess, and mentally supercilious as to her niece, it never made him forget that his duty was to please them. All that it took



from him was his spontaneous wish to do so. He was constrained in their presence ; his conversation was forced ; and though he did not avoid their company, he did not seek it. But his sense of what he owed them was so strong, that he did what he could to pay his debt to them indirectly, and this in a way which had all the grace of being natural. He constantly devoted himself to the children. He took them for walks ; he told them stories ; he played with them. Both the Princess and Mrs. Schilizzi were delighted ; they were even touched : and he more than made up, in their eyes, for any want of attention to themselves. One of the children indeed, called Irma, after her mother, had an attraction for him of a very peculiar kind. Happy and laughing as she was, when playing with a talking doll, or with a long dachs-hound who haunted the courtyard, her expression had in repose a curious suggestion of sadness, as if the regrets and sorrows of her far-off womanhood made in her child's face a prophetic and wistful mirage. The thought of this child



was constantly coming back to him ; and one afternoon in one of his lonely rambles he caught himself saying aloud the following few words, which, as they touched his ears, startled him by an unintended sound in them like verse—

“Irma, I see the stainless cheek  
Where life shall write a stain.”

Verse-making about a child will perhaps seem to some people an occupation little to be expected from a man preoccupied with ambition, and elated as Grenville had been by a compliment paid to his pedigree. But the elation just described, which he felt upon that score, did not remain long in its first stage of effervescence. The satisfaction which had at first excited him, before long calmed him. His future seemed assured ; doubts about it ceased to trouble him ; and his mind having thus made triumphant peace with the world, thoughts and feelings began to again invade him, which half pained and half excited him with troubles of another kind. Assuming, as for the time he did, that his

practical career would be successful, he began to ask himself, what was the value of success? The speculative riddles of existence once again confronted him with all their old importunity, and their old poignant import. Having felt at last that for him life had something solid and satisfying, he sought to recover his sobriety in this fit of unwonted intoxication, by telling himself that life and its best prizes were hollow; and the hollowness he imputed to them gave them a ring of music. He seemed to be saying of the world, not "a poor thing, but my own"; but "my own, and therefore a poor thing." He could afford to take this view, as a man securely rich can afford to despise riches; or as a man protected by a parapet can look down into gulfs under him.

In this condition, his coming solitary excursion became every hour more and more pleasurable to anticipate. For a few days he was obliged to postpone it, in order that before he started some letters he was expecting might reach him; but as soon as

these arrived, he at once made his arrangements. The evening before his departure found him in such excellent spirits that the Princess thought she had never known him so agreeable, nor had Mrs. Schilizzi ever felt so much at ease with him.

When he was alone in his bedroom, he confided his happiness to his diary. "In my prospects," he wrote, "I have only one thing to complain of; and everything has some drawback. Count T——, to whom an introduction has been given me, and with whom I might have stayed, is away. I shall have therefore to put up in a village or small town called Lichtenbourg. I gather that there is a mineral spring in the place, frequented by a few local invalids; so the inn to which I must go, and which my servant knows, will be something more than a tavern. It calls itself the Hôtel Imperial, which sounds sufficiently grand; but I know what these obscure hotels are, and no doubt it will be most uncomfortable. It is also nine miles from the nearest railway station; so I shall

have to jolt to it in some battered vehicle of the country."

Then he closed his book; and his mind, with an odd rapidity, strayed away to the face of the child Irma. The impression it had produced on him renewed itself and sank deeper into his consciousness, associating itself with many other thoughts—thoughts which filled his mind like the scents of a garden at night. Some of them began to clothe themselves in fragments of rhythmical expression. He opened the window, and looked out on the moonlit park. Its mounds of shadow were hushed in the warm darkness, and the scents of an actual garden rose from the flower-beds below. With greater and greater rapidity his thoughts marshalled themselves into rhythm, and the rhymes sounded like sheep-bells, which the thoughts made naturally by their movement. He returned to his writing-table, and before he betook himself to his bed, some sheets of paper were covered with the following lines—

Oh, dainty figure, floating hair,  
Oh, small face, turn and let me see !  
Turn, Irma, turn ! A child like you  
Has always charm for me.

Oh, sad as death, and soft as love,  
What's this that I in you behold ?  
All life seems gazing from the eyes—  
The eyes of eight years old.

All life ! Why, child, what's life to you ?  
Your dog, your doll—a toy, a pet—  
These are its joys :—and for its griefs,  
They match its joys. And yet—

Between your eyelids swims the look  
That says “my faith in prayer is o'er.”  
Your mouth seems quivering to the lost  
“ Kiss me that kiss once more ! ”

Is this a fancy, do you think ?  
Merely an idle fancy ? Nay,  
Your face but says before its time  
What soon your heart will say.

That look was moulded in the past,  
Before your father's days began ;  
And means what life will mean for you,  
And long has meant for man.

Those young clear eyes, before they fade,  
Shall scan their past, and read “in vain.”  
Irma, I see the stainless cheek  
Where life shall write a stain.

But oh, I see the fire which first  
Shall cast its soft disguise divine  
O'er earth and heaven, and envy those  
For whom your eyes will shine—

Whose pulses shall be stirred by yours,  
And who, on the wet sands of youth,  
Shall found that house of faiths and hopes  
Which poets dream is truth.

Oh, happy dream, and happy they  
Who dream it one by one with you !  
Ah ! by their aid might I once more  
Dream and believe it true ;

Before once more I wake, as you  
And all one day shall wake to feel  
Their fair dreams broken one by one  
On time's relentless wheel.

For love builds up, and life destroys :  
But well—however this may be,  
My child, ere love shall live for you,  
He will be dead for me.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THOUGH Grenville's imaginative mood had by no means next day deserted him, it had lost for the time, at all events, all admixture of sadness. So far as the railway was concerned, his journey was not formidable. The station at which he was to alight was but forty miles away; and the train, being an Hungarian express, took but three hours in reaching it. The weather was now as hot as an English midsummer. Flowers dotted the plains like sparks dropped from a rocket, and there was a sigh, a stir, and a life in the sunlit air as if the lips of the present were expecting those of the future. The groups of peasants and farmers at the intermediate stations seemed to Grenville like happy scenes out of an



opera ; and some of the simple vehicles which he saw waiting outside did not augur ill for his coming nine miles drive. At his own station, however, a great surprise awaited him. When Fritz escorted him out through the small booking-office, instead of having to look for some varnished cart on springs, he saw before him not only two smart omnibuses, with the name of Lichtenbourg blazoned in gold letters on them, but a collection of landaus far better appointed than most that are to be had on hire at places like Nice or Brighton. A moment later his servant had engaged one of them, and he was presently driving off with a rapid but easy motion.

These little touches of modern fashionable civilization gave to his dreamy mood a flavour of mundane piquancy, increasing by contrast the charm of the country he now was entering. It was totally different from that which surrounded the castle of the Princess. First came a mile or so of rich emerald meadows, dotted with quiet cattle ; and an

old quadrangular manor-house, with a tower at each corner, was standing and drowsing knee-deep in the grass. Grenville saw over a hedge its quaint gardens and greenhouses. Then came a line of hills covered with pine and beech; and the road was presently deep in a sylvan valley. The scenery now grew by turns wilder and still more smiling. Wooded gorges alternated with pasture and peeping villages, and village greens each of which had its crucifix, with *prie-dieus* and seats before it, for open-air devotion. Crucifixes were also curiously frequent along the roads; and nailed to trees from which they could watch the travellers, pictures of saints looked through the leaves like birds. By and by came a region of blossoming orchards; then a gorge with a torrent brawling at the bottom; and up in the sky, rising above the foliage, a high-roofed castle, whose tower had a copper dome like a soap-bubble. "That is Count T——'s," said Fritz from his seat by the coachman; and Grenville knew he was nearing his destination. He passed a water-

mill; then came a cottage with an arbour; and on the cottage was painted the words "Wilhelms-Quelle." Similar cottages, with the names of other springs on them, succeeded each other at intervals of about a furlong; and judging of his future from the aspect of these primitive establishments, he began to augur for himself but scant luxury for the night. Presently, however, on the side of a swelling hill, he saw extended the line of a long white building, on which, as he approached it, were legible the words "Hôtel de Milan." He saw, as he passed, a great glazed restaurant, with waiters and white tables; and beyond was a garden with pavilions in it.

"Our hotel, *excellenz*," said Fritz, turning round to him, "is in the town. It is much better than this one. This house, sir, this villa in front of us, is the villa of the King of Moldavia."

"Upon my word," thought Grenville, "I never expected this!"

On either side of him now were alleys of horse-chestnuts, clipped as carefully as a box

hedge in a garden, and symmetrical as wooden toys. The road, or the street as one might call it, dipped over the brow of a hill, and a colony of other villas, with verandahs and gaily-painted shutters, on various acclivities, rose out of clouds of leafage. Presently there came a little row of pigmy shops; and opposite these, before the portico of a large white building, the carriage drew up. This was the Hôtel Impérial. Inside there was a ghostly hush everywhere; but the establishment seemed as well-appointed as if it had been at Baden-Baden, in the old days of the gambling. It was now nearly seven o'clock; and whilst Grenville was making his toilet, Fritz ordered dinner for him, and then came to guide him to the restaurant. Here was a new surprise. The restaurant, which adjoined the hotel, but was not actually part of it, formed one side of a garden, of which the hotel formed another; and the tables were arranged, some in a long saloon which was painted with blue skies and flowers, some in a verandah which had the garden and real

flowers under it. In the middle of the garden was a kiosk ready for a band; and on the two other sides of the square were ball-rooms, reading-rooms, and a theatre. The whole place had an air of Baden-Baden in miniature.

But it was a Baden-Baden that was for the present sleeping. The important Frenchman who superintended the restaurant informed Grenville that the season was only just begun—indeed that that day was reckoned the first day of it; and he handed his excellency the opening number of the Visitors' List—a little flimsy sheet with not more than fifty names in it. Lamps were sparkling in the kiosk; dainty tables were laid; Grenville's dinner was really of the most delicate kind; but besides his own, only two tables were occupied; in the garden below was only a loitering group or two; and such voices, and the movement of such feet as there were, were oddly audible in the prevalent dream-like silence.

After dinner he rambled through the little town, with its hilly roadways dim under

their mysterious foliage. The fantastic villas gleamed. There was gilding on the gates of some of them—coronets and twisted cyphers. The whole place was kept with a faultless and fastidious neatness, which was doubly piquant from a strange suggestion of primitiveness. There was no gas, but the clipt horse-chestnut alleys were lit with lamps that shone like midsummer glow-worms. There were seats in green recesses, and wandering paths amongst verdure. Everything—even the gravel raked so carefully—the gravel stirred now by hardly a foot but Grenville's—teemed with suggestions of unknown dainty life. The air flowed warm under the leaves like a human sigh, carrying with it breaths of jasmine. It seemed to be waiting for something that would soon come to it—for floating sounds of bands, for whispers, for women's dresses. It seemed to be waiting for life, like a woman waiting for love. It seemed to be saying, "Here is my heart—fill it!"

This subtle impression sunk deep into Grenville's mind, and when he awoke next morning,



it was there like a bunch of violets. He was to start early on one of his expeditions, and by half-past eight Fritz had a carriage ready for him. Away he drove into the fresh youth of the day, past open Venetian shutters, and bedding hung over window-sills. His road for some way was that he had traversed yesterday. The apple-blossoms and the gorges again met his eyes. But in his heart and his nerves there was now a new restlessness. All life seemed to be imploring for something; and his own life added its vague but passionate petition. Filmy memories of love-affairs long past began to come down to him in the resinous breaths of the forest, where the dew was still on the leaves of the wild strawberries; and with them fugitive senses of some yet uncaptured happiness. Even a peasant kneeling at the shrine of a wayside saint thrilled his nerves with some undefined expectancy.

It was a day of dreams. The castle—the object of his expedition—was something beyond his wildest hopes. Like the one he had seen already, it covered an isolated rock; only



large as that one was, this was three times its size, and was almost ghastly in the completeness of its preservation, like a corpse that is undecayed. The gate-towers, the guard-rooms, the batteries, the long battlemented walls, the fields and gardens enclosed in their vast cincture, the quaint pavilions looking like miniature forts, and lastly the dwelling itself, hugging the edge of a precipice, and reached by three drawbridges—a pile with a hundred windows, crooked arcaded courts, rooms stacked with armour, halls with painted ceilings, where tattered tapestry still hung, and worm-eaten dim chairs still glimmered with gilding—all this, though deserted excepting for one custodian, had hardly a stone or a tile on a roof missing. This overpowering shell of the past, with its strange enchanted silence, struck a note in his heart like musical strings vibrating—a wail after that elusive world in which alone the heart can be satisfied. It seemed, to Grenville, to be echoing with what was gone, just as Lichtenbourg with its lamps seemed to be waiting for what was coming.

Of these two impressions, the last became even more vivid that evening. He found when he dined that there were several parties in the restaurant; and afterwards the band in the kiosque gave its first performance for the season. There were some listeners under the trees, and a faint whisper of feet; and now and then through the shadow moved the gleam of some rustling toilette. Early next morning he found his way to the springs—very different from the antiquated cottages by the road. They were near together, all of them in a winding garden, which filled with its walks and grass the bottom of a wooded valley. Again the band was playing: some visitors were drinking the waters. Gay parasols made bright patches of colour; and, here and there, brilliant from banks of leafage, there shone forth masses of blossoming lilac. Grenville wandered about scanning the people curiously. He was interested to notice in certain of them an air of suppressed fashion; and although presumably they had come most of them for their health, yet they and the

scene together were somehow suggestive of dissipation. He had intended that day to have gone on his second expedition; but the life about him stirred his fancy so pleasantly, that he determined instead to remain quiet and observe it.

But in an hour the gardens were empty; the town looked lifeless, as if all its inhabitants were hibernating; and he presently fell a prey to a blank reaction. The silence and solitude gradually lay like a weight on him. He regretted that he had not got his expedition over; and he longed to be back with the Princess, hearing her crisp voice again.

Nor were his spirits raised when he learnt towards the evening that this waste of one day had necessitated the waste of another. The castle he was to see was inhabited; to-morrow it would be closed to visitors, so he would have to wait on and go there the day after. He got his information from the clerk in the bureau of his hotel; but the first dejection it caused him received some sudden

relief. He was just moving away when a series of German exclamations reached his ear, as if intended for it, and were followed by his own name. He turned round, and before him was the doctor—his companion in the train—who informed him that Lichtenbourg was the scene of his new practice, and that he had just been visiting professionally one of the children of the hotel manager.

To Grenville the sight of an acquaintance was like a fire on a winter's day. He induced the doctor to have some coffee with him in the garden. He asked him many questions both about the place and himself, and presently told him his own reasons for being there. The doctor, though a new-comer, had much local knowledge already, and had plenty to tell him about the object of his postponed expedition. It was a castle till lately the property of an old but decayed family, who had sold it under pressure of necessity to a marvellous Polish Count. This personage, whose family also was impoverished, had by some means or other made a large fortune in

Egypt, where for years he had been essential to the Khedive, and had acquired the dignity of a Pasha. The doctor himself had never visited the castle; but wonderful tales were current of the splendours to be seen in the interior. "And," added the doctor, smiling, "it lies beyond wild forests, which the peasants still believe to be filled by gnomes and goblins." Grenville was delighted with this picturesque intelligence; but the doctor did not seem to share such pleasure as he had given. Grenville noticed in him a sadness which civility could hardly mask, and asked with kindly interest after his health and his professional prospects.

"By and by," said the doctor, "if nothing intervenes to prevent it, my practice ought to be considerable, since this place will be filled by consumptive patients. We doctors, you see, are an example of the life that is generated by decay. But, as I told you, when I had the honour of travelling with you, I was not born to be fortunate. However," he added, "I am no longer a cripple—

at all events not physically ; and now, if you will excuse me, I must use my strength to leave you."

Grenville asked him to dine either that night or the next, but the doctor declined. "I fear," he said, "there are many reasons which make my acceptance of your gracious invitation impossible."

There was obviously something so much amiss with him, that Grenville that night, meeting the manager in the hall, spoke to him of the doctor, and praising him in the highest terms, observed at the same time that he seemed to be out of spirits. The manager was much impressed by the praises of the English "excellency," and at once began lamenting, as well as explaining, the troubles from which the doctor was suffering. It appeared they were financial. The poor man, after his losses, had borrowed money of the Jews, one of whom, growing impatient, had chosen the present moment as a favourable opportunity for pressing him with the extremest measures of the law. The manager remarked



with much philosophic commiseration on the pity it was that a savant so gifted as the doctor should be so seriously hampered at a critical point in his career by the want of a sum which was less than two hundred pounds. Grenville agreed that it was so, and his blank prospects for to-morrow became doubly depressing to him after what he had just heard. Nor when the morning came did things wear a brighter aspect. For an hour or so the scene at the wells amused him. But then again came dulness. In depression he started for a walk into the country. On returning to his hotel he thought half the day had been killed ; but he found on consulting his watch that it was but half-past eleven. The gardens were empty except for two nurse-maids. The theatre and conversation rooms looked as if they would never again be open. The whole place, which but two days ago was so new and delightfully suggestive, began to oppress him with a sort of hateful familiarity. Suddenly, as he was sitting on a bench, begging the hours to move quicker, a thought occurred to him,



of which the immediate result was that he extracted an old letter from his pocket, and began on its blank side to scribble a series of calculations. "I think," he muttered presently, "I could manage to spare sufficient." And entering the hotel, he at once asked for the manager. "I am concerned," he said to him, "at hearing of the distress of our friend the doctor; and if it is true that the sum which you mentioned would relieve him, I will ask this favour of you. Let me—and I will do so now—pay that sum to yourself; and you, without mentioning me, advance the same to the doctor. Tell him that his personal security is in your eyes quite sufficient, and make the terms as easy as he could consent to without humiliation." The manager's respect for Grenville, great as it was before, became now even greater; and he was willing to do whatever his excellency should suggest. He was besides a man of good disposition. He admired generosity, refraining from it solely on account of its expense; but now that in this case such drawback had been removed,

he willingly engaged that everything should be settled before night.

Grenville after this was in a rather better humour; but still the hours dragged wearily, and the afternoon seemed endless. At last, however, the aspect of things brightened. The dinner-hour drew near. He was not hungry; but to eat would at all events be an occupation. In a somewhat happier mood he was strolling in front of the restaurant, looking occasionally at the waiters as they bustled and arranged the tables. The warm daylight was dying in a dim flush, and here and there within-doors lamps were being lighted. Nothing was wanting to the scene but the life that it seemed to call for. Suddenly, on turning round, he saw moving amongst the trees the graceful figure of a woman, which at once startled him into interest. Her pale-pink dress and black hat, with feathers in it, spoke of the most refined fashion of Mayfair or of Paris; and there was something in her air and movements, though he could only see her back, which filled him at once with a pleasant

sense of curiosity. He took a turn round the kiosque, so as to meet her and see her face. The manœuvre was successful. He encountered her. He started—it was Mrs. Schilizzi !

“ Who in the world,” he exclaimed, “ would have thought to see you here !” He smiled as he spoke, and his manner was more cordial and friendly than it ever had been whilst they were staying together at the castle. She, on the contrary, looked at him a little coldly, and remained at a distance from him, as if wishing to move on.

“ I’m so sorry we troubled you,” she said. “ It was my aunt who insisted on it. Myself I knew quite well that you were too busy to attend to such matters.”

“ What on earth do you mean ?” exclaimed Grenville, with an artless accent of bewilderment, which the most suspicious of listeners could not have doubted was genuine.

Mrs. Schilizzi did not doubt it certainly. The slight cloud on her face melted with a naïve quickness. “ What !” she ex-

claimed with a smile. "Didn't you get our telegram?"

"Never," he said. "What telegram?"

"Why," she replied, "just after you left, I heard from my doctor about the place I thought of going to. He said there was scarlatina there; so that put it out of the question; and he strongly recommended that I should bring my children here. My aunt telegraphed at once to you, in my name, begging you to engage some rooms for us; but getting no answer, I came over myself. I thought, too, that before deciding, I might as well see how I liked the look of things."

At this moment Fritz appeared from the hotel, and as soon as he caught sight of Grenville, hurried up to him with an envelope.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Grenville, "if this were your telegram at last. It is! Well, the mystery explains itself. My name was written *Glanvil*, and the address was 'Hôtel de Milan.'"

"Ah," said Mrs. Schilizzi, "that was the agent's fault. He put the address. He

thought he knew all about it. This, I find, is the right hotel. I shall settle about our rooms to-morrow, and go back in the afternoon, and at once make my arrangements."

"It's a pity," said Grenville, civilly, "that you can't wait a day. In that case we might have gone back together. I propose to-morrow to see one of those old castles."

"How interesting!" she exclaimed, with such an air of sincerity that Grenville doubted for a moment whether he would not ask her to come with him. The idea, however, was interrupted by Fritz, who announced that his dinner was ready; and as Mrs. Schilizzi had ordered hers in her sitting-room, he took himself off, expressing a hope at parting that he might meet her an hour or so later, when the band began its performance. She nodded a pleased assent, and by and by, in the lamp-light, he returned to the same spot, and waited for her under the leafy shadows.

"God bless my soul, we have smartness

here with a vengeance!" he said to himself presently, as a figure in a long pale cloak, that was braided with gold and trimmed with swan's-down, came down the steps of the hotel accompanied by a maid who was peering about inquiringly.

He at once advanced, and with an air of happy relief, Mrs. Schilizzi said, "I shouldn't have known where to look for you. One man in the dusk is so much like another."

"You," said Grenville, "at all events, can't say that about women."

She glanced at him timidly, as they seated themselves in view of the kiosque. "Do you mean," she asked, "that my cloak is too smart for this place?"

"Not at all," said Grenville. As he said it he was hardly sincere; but a moment later he felt that he had become so, when he glanced at her face above the swan's-down that seemed like a little flower—a flower childishly conscious of the prettiness of its own petals. It was not a face that excited in him any great interest, but the element of childishness which

he now began to discover in her had, in spite of its freshness, a certain something of pathos, and made him feel kindly towards her, as he might have done towards a child. He began to describe to her the wonders of the castle he had visited. She listened intently, taking in every word, and he finally did the thing he had already contemplated. He invited her to come with him to the other castle to-morrow.

“Could I?” she exclaimed. “I wonder if I could manage to wait?” The pleasure of the prospect for her was doubled by the complete surprise. She played with her doubts for a few moments, and then assented, with a soft laugh of delight.

When they parted, which they did before very long, he took another solitary stroll, in the lamp-lit horse-chestnut alleys; and in a mood of lazy conjecture he began to think her over. In the course of the conversation they had spoken a little about their visit to the Princess’s; and one or two things that Mrs. Schilizzi had said had considerably raised his



opinion of her. He had made some passing allusion to Countess C——; and Mrs. Schilizzi, with a discrimination and also with a decision that struck him, had remarked on the charm of her appearance, and the still greater charm of her manner, adding, "Not that she cares to be nice to me; but she's so self-possessed and natural, there's an artistic pleasure in watching her." "Your aunt's artistic sense," he had answered, "is not quite so developed." Into Mrs. Schilizzi's face had come an expression of humour, as if a piece of gravel had rippled a quiet pool, and she had said, "Of course my aunt imagines that the Countess snubs her." The words were commonplace enough; but her tone and expression in saying them seemed to Grenville, as he called her image back to him, to show the keenest and yet gentlest understanding of the whole facts in question. And yet that this should be so was a puzzle as well as a surprise to him. He tried to figure to himself Mrs. Schilizzi in London: and the only place at home into which he

could possibly fit her, was not one that seemed consistent with much social discrimination. He thought of the pretty faces, and dresses just as pretty, that on any June morning might be seen thronging the Row. He thought of how many of those faces had no name or meaning, in the only world which he or his friends knew. And then he thought of others, whose names were perhaps known to him, and who at least suggested a definite social type. But it was a type that to him was more distasteful than any. It was that of the women who are fashionable in everything except in fact—the adored of youthful Guardsmen—the heroines of water-parties and of Hurlingham; and in his own mind he classed Mrs. Schilizzi as one of these. He pictured her drawing-room, scented and over-ornamented, with men much at their ease in it, lounging in deep arm-chairs or on sofas, and playing impertinently with her knick-knacks, whilst she lounged also, resenting nothing that was said to her. This did not make him forgetful of what he now thought

were her merits ; nor did it make him look on her less good-naturedly ; but it did prevent his feeling the contentment he might have felt, in the prospect of having to-morrow so pretty and appreciative a companion.

## CHAPTER IX.

By a quarter to ten the following morning, a smart-looking victoria stood at the hotel door; and Grenville was smoking a cigarette with the air of a man waiting. The carriage in fact had been there for something like twenty minutes, and his face had begun to wear a slight shade of annoyance, though it was the annoyance of resignation rather than that of impatience. At last a voice was heard within on the staircase—the voice of a lady calling out to her maid. “Julie,” it was saying, “this is really too bad of you. You first give me my wrong dress, and now these gloves are both for my left hand. Take them away, and bring me some others instantly.” There was a certain note of temper in all this

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which for the moment slightly jarred upon Grenville. The impression however was instantly done away with, when the same voice was heard, with completely restored good-humour and also with a softness in it, full of a quick repentance, saying, "Oh, Julie, thank you—these are just what I wanted." A pale brown dress, the colour of which Grenville recognized, gleamed through the shadow of the hall, and Mrs. Schilizzi issued.

Her lips, and her eyes also, were full of apologies for her lateness; and the flush in her cheeks showed the sincerity of her emotion. "I *am* so sorry," she repeated as soon as they were settled in the carriage. "Waiting is a thing I never could bear myself." She turned her eyes, and the brown feathers of her hat, to him, her chin hiding itself in the sable about her collar—turned them, with an air that might have seemed to be asking for admiration, if it had not with such naïve frankness asked for pardon instead. Grenville's pleasant answer disarmed her timidity. "My maid," she went on, "was so stupid.

She gave me the wrong dress. I only saw it was the wrong one when it was on ; and then I had to change it. This suits me to-day so much better than the other."

"What," said Grenville, "do your frocks change their colours, like a chameleon?"

"No," she replied. "But I change ; and this is the colour that suits me best when I am happy." Here she broke into a little musical laugh, which died in her eyes into a look of returning timidity, as she added, "Mr. Grenville, you will think I am very silly?"

Grenville thought she was, but was too civil to say so ; and yet at the same time he had some undefined impression that the silliness, such as it was, was a thing on the surface only ; and he felt as they drove off, amongst the villas and the horse-chestnuts, a pleasure in the sense of sharing with her the soft air of the morning, and all the day's prospects which it seemed to breathe in their faces. This impression deepened as from time to time he glanced at her, and he saw how fresh was the pleasure that she herself was experiencing.

He had thought that her face was like a flower yesterday evening. It was now like a flower with the dew on it, tremulous with life and brightness. At first however he was annoyed by the frequency of the exclamations with which she called attention to this thing or that thing—the shining roof of a villa, a hedge, or even a column of smoke; but he gradually realized that common as these objects were, there was something distinctive in the aspect of each as she noticed it—some effect of light, some tender contrast of colour, which when it was pointed out to him he at once appreciated, but which, had he been by himself, would have altogether escaped him.

“Oh,” she exclaimed at last, drawing a long breath, “look at that! Look! Do let us stop the carriage.”

The carriage was stopped; and then, with an amused perplexity, he turned round to her, asking her: “Well, what is it?”

She pointed to an orchard of cherry-blossom. He had himself already remarked it—a feature in the landscape, a part of its passing pageant.



But to her it had a beauty in itself, peculiar to that moment. "Do you see the petals?" she said. "They are palpitating like the wings of butterflies."

There was in her voice an almost religious tone, like that of a child repeating a hymn with feeling. She saw he understood her, and gave him a glance of gratitude; and then her gravity, like a small wave on the sand, sparkled and broke into a laugh of unconscious happiness.

Grenville watched her curiously. Happiness, so it seemed to him, was buoying her up into self-confidence, and her real self was opening, just like the petals of the cherry-blossoms. He began to feel an impulse to confide his thoughts seriously to her.

"I," he said, as the carriage moved on again, "enjoy nature in some ways perhaps as much as most people; but I never saw any one so sensitive to its beauty as you. I have already learned much from you. The spring is showing me beauties I never saw in it before."

She turned to him blushing crimson, with an expression of startled pain.

"How can you say so?" she faltered. "You are laughing at me. I could not teach anything to anybody—to you least of all people."

"Indeed," said Grenville, kindly, "you do me a great wrong. I was not laughing. I meant what I said, literally."

"Of course," she went on, only partially reassured, "you understand nature—a great poet like you. You can describe it—you can express its meaning. I can only feel it, and I am foolish to show my feelings. But a minute ago I was so happy that I forgot myself."

"It is you," said Grenville, "who are laughing at me now. Me a great poet! I published one small volume, which only my friends read; and they have now forgotten it. It was a piece of myself, perhaps; but it was not a piece of literature."

"Yes," she said, "that was its great charm. Most books are books. Your book was a

person. I was not one of your friends; but I read it, and have never forgotten it. I bought a copy; and what do you think mother did? She told me I was so extravagant. All you said about nature—I remember still how it moved me, more even than Keats did. What you said about other things, I didn't understand—then.”

Grenville now began to notice in her a characteristic which interested him. Her mood changed like an English sky in April. At one moment she would be hidden behind some cloud of shyness; and then again she would brighten, and show, with her unconscious confidence, herself and her slightest thoughts as the sky shows its blueness.

“I'll tell you,” he said, “what I think about your appreciation of nature. You realize how beautiful it is in itself. What I attend to most is, the human thoughts it stirs in me. Look about you at the valley we now are entering. Look at these wayside crosses! And there—nailed against that pine-tree, do you see the picture of St. Joseph—so uncouth

and so simple? And those peasants too in the wood, tugging at their unfortunate cart-horse—to me they seem the serfs of some phantom baron. The whole place is full of the air of the Middle Ages, and all my imagination is troubled by the smell of the pine-trees.”

She looked about her, taking in every detail, a new excitement changing her whole expression. “Ah!” she exclaimed, “you are right. This is just like a fairy-tale. See that little gray building; it must, I am sure, be a hermitage. And where does the baron live? And do you think there are robbers? Nothing seems real except you, and the carriage, and my frock. Do go on; I want you to tell me more.”

“Well,” he replied, entering readily into her mood, “the farther we drive the deeper we are getting into fairy-land, and the place we shall reach at last is a genuine fairy castle. It is not a ruin; it is lived in; it is full of all sorts of splendours, that are hidden away under its moss-grown roofs and pinnacles. It

belongs to a mysterious Count, who spent all his youth in the East, and returned to Europe laden with gold and jewels. As to this I am serious: I am not romancing. A man at Lichtenbourg told me his whole history. He is a Polish Count, and also an Egyptian Pasha. The castle is very old. There is a picture of it in the book I showed you; but what it is like now I know no better than you."

She leaned back silently, smiling at her own thoughts: then suddenly she looked up at him, and said, laughing into his eyes, "And tell me—do tell me—will there be ghosts, and drawbridges—and a chapel, and dungeons, and winding stairs and balconies? You who have seen so much can hardly tell how excited I am!"

She was so completely natural, and there was in her spirits something not only so buoyant but at the same time so confiding, that Grenville was charmed by it into a curious sense of intimacy with her. He felt that they were playfellows sharing the same holiday.

"Do," she went on presently, "do promise me that there will be balconies, with rusty iron scroll-work, beautifully wrought. I am sure there will be ; and from one of them a Princess used to look into the distance, waiting perhaps for something that never came." The laugh had died out of her voice as she uttered these last words. They fell from her lips with a slow meditative softness. "Do you," she said, "understand how my thoughts wander?"

"Yes," he answered, "and mine are wandering with them."

He hardly knew what he was saying, but his voice came like truth to her. For a time they hardly spoke. They had left the more beaten road, and were ascending a rugged track, which climbed up a wooded hill-side, and from which nothing but wood was visible. The smells of bark and of leaves became pungent about them. Some wild-eyed charcoal-burners scrambled down a bank, with baskets on their bowed backs, and stared after the carriage. Presently came the cottage of a

forester, with some wolves' heads nailed against it. These Grenville pointed out to his companion, who laid her hand on his arm, with an impulse of imaginative terror. Then he said—

“I wonder if I dare tell you something more?”

“Yes,” she whispered; “what?”

“All these valleys are haunted by gnomes and spirits. The peasants say so, and surely they ought to know. Ah! you shiver. But you needn't. They don't come out in daylight. Well,” he added, “and what do you think now? Does not the mystery of the forest seem to be closing round us?”

For an hour the journey continued to be of this character.

At last, however, after a number of ups and downs, they emerged on some high grass-land, with a timbered farm-house belonging to it, which bore the date of 1490, and on one of whose gable-ends was a quaint Madonna fading. A little further on came hedges that showed signs of clipping. A shed stood by the road,



with some carts and ploughs under its shelter ; and a moment later, without any warning, the carriage had stopped before the gateway of a discoloured turreted pile, the extent and the situation of which was made doubtful by the trees surrounding it. A porter unbarred the doors, and bowing obsequiously to the visitors, admitted them to a court, narrow but of great length, entirely surrounded by buildings, and having flower-beds and lilac-bushes in the middle. Their career of sight-seeing was apparently all marked out for them. They were taken up a flight of fantastic steps, which brought them to an open arcade, running all the length of the court ; and down this they were led to a cluster of towers at the end of it. A series of loopholes pierced in the outer wall showed them as they passed that the castle was on the shoulder of a hill, and gardens and tree-tops were visible far below them. A small door opened, and the exhibition began. Outside the walls were pallid with rude plaster ; within, the visitors found themselves treading on an Italian pavement ; they were startled

by a glitter of profuse and barbarous gilding, by purple portières, and fanciful Moorish looking-glasses. These decorations belonged to a sort of vestibule: and out of this, by various crooked passages, and through more portières, they passed to a nest of bedrooms. The situation of all of them was romantic and picturesque in the extreme. They occupied strange towers and angles of the ancient building, and looked down over the green depths below; but their furniture and their decorations were of the strangest kind imaginable. The beds, fantastic in shape, were draped with cloth of gold, the dressing-tables were garnished with pictures of Oriental dancing-girls, the ormolu frames of which glittered with enamel and turquoise; silver stars and crescents studded the ceilings, and crimson rugs glowed on the polished floors. Presently they found themselves in the Count's private apartments. His bed had legs of ivory. The quilt was almost covered by an embroidered coronet; a painted coronet covered the bottom of his bath; above his wash-hand

stand were twenty bottles of essences; and his jug and basin—both enormous—were of silver. Then, by means of many tortuous staircases, they reached what originally had been the banqueting-hall of the castle. It was long and low, with a roof of ponderous vaulting, but the Count had seen fit to relieve this with florid gilding. There was a mosaic pavement, as slippery and as shining as ice, and the furniture looked like the stock of a bric-à-brac dealer in Florence. From this they passed into a long suite of rooms—a billiard-room, hung with jewelled Oriental weapons, a drawing-room, where everything—even the legs of the tables—was ultramarine, a great saloon surrounded by Gobelins tapestry, a dining-room, an antechamber, and last of all a chapel, where the walls were dim with monumental tablets, and kneeling knights carved in discoloured marble, and where a golden lamp in the silence was burning before the altar.

This apparently ended the general routine of sight-seeing, but Fritz, industrious as ever

on behalf of his master's dignity, had meanwhile been impressing the greatness of it on a fat, supercilious-looking seneschal; and the visitors were accordingly informed that if they would like to use it for their luncheon, there was a room with a fine view, which would be very much at their service. The offer was accepted. The room was in one of the towers, and, owing to some lucky circumstance, it had escaped scot-free from the irrepressible taste of the Count. The walls were whitewashed, the floor bare; the cabinets, chairs, and tables were of dark worm-eaten walnut; and in a corner was an old spinet.

"Here," exclaimed Grenville, "is the castle in its natural state. The ghosts of the past I am sure must make this their refuge." He went to the window, which he opened. "Mrs. Schilizzi," he said, "come here, let me beg of you, and see your dream realized." She went towards him, and they stepped out on a balcony—a balcony whose railings were of beautiful old wrought iron. To right and left of them were irregular bulging towers, and

steep tiled roofs spiked with fantastic ornaments. Below them a wood of beech-trees descended the precipitous hill-side, and from the bottom of this an expanse of country spread itself, reaching away to hills on the far horizon. Mrs. Schilizzi said nothing, but leaned on the rusty iron, and seemed lost in the prospect. He watched her dainty figure against the background of weather-beaten wall. Her look and attitude were grave and more absorbed than he had ever seen them hitherto, and though her expression was not what would be necessarily called religious, she made him think of St. Monica and the balcony of the house at Ostia. "I suppose," he said at last, "you are fulfilling your own scripture. You seem to be waiting for the something that never comes."

She turned her eyes to him. They seemed to be full of dreams, as a pool when it ceases to sparkle becomes full of reflections. Then, as if to perplex him, the sparkle came suddenly back again, and she said, "Do you mean that I seem to be waiting for our luncheon?"

“For that,” said Grenville, “you need at any rate wait no longer. See! our table is spread. Was anything ever so charming!”

Mrs. Schilizzi, as she moved to take her seat, opened the old spinet and struck a jangling chord on the keys. “There!” she exclaimed, “now I have done with dreaming. Mr. Grenville, all this is making me quite beside myself. Perhaps I shall be better after I have eaten something.”

One of the servants brought in a bowl of lilacs, which he placed on the table, by way of a simple ornament. She gave an exclamation of pleasure at sight of the delicate colour. “A thing like that,” she said, “always puts me in spirits.”

As they eat their cold provisions they began to talk over the castle, and Grenville enlarged on the extreme interest of it as a building, and the grotesque misfortune that had befallen it through the taste of its present owner.

“You shouldn’t,” she said, “talk about that. You are spoiling everything. I suppose it’s vulgar, if you come to take it to pieces ;



but here in this forest, I think one's imagination alters it; and it's splendid for the time, if one only believes it's splendid."

"Yes," said Grenville, "I think you are right there. Ridiculous and vulgar as all these splendours are, they are, at the same time, so audacious, so barbarous, and so insolent, that they load one's mind with some odd sense of romance. A place like this would in England be quite impossible."

"I feel," she said, "that I hardly know where I am—where, or in what century. I don't believe that I ever thought much about such things before; but what you used to say to my aunt—you didn't say much to me—somehow seemed to open a new door in my mind."

Grenville, though he felt her attractive, and was now quite at his ease with her, had yet no wish for conversation that was too personal; so he said, "But surely, so far as regards the *where*, you must know this country as well as you know England."

"You under-estimate," she said, "my capa-



city for knowing little. Haven't I, Mr. Grenville, told you so much already? My aunt's castle—I know the four walls of that. I know my husband's flat in Vienna, the Prater, and the Opera-house. I know nothing besides, but Countess D——'s villa in Hungary."

"Who," asked, Grenville, "is Countess D——?"

"My cousin," she said. "Mother was a Hungarian. She was very poor, but of very good family—you must not think me boastful for saying that; only except Alma D—— her relations are all dead; and Alma's villa was new and might have been anywhere; and outside its grounds all that I saw was fields. As to Vienna," she went on after a pause, "of course a person like myself—the wife of a Greek engineer—is nobody and sees nothing. I am there either a prisoner or a tourist. Considering that, till I married, I lived always with ladies and gentlemen, it is a little odd sometimes to feel myself in that position—not," she added, "that in London, or rather

at Hampstead, I am anybody. I am very provincial at the best of times ; or perhaps, if I had only the courage, I ought to call myself by the terrible word suburban."

Just as in some pictures the most delicate colours are in the varnish, so the most delicate shades of some characters reveal themselves less in their words than in their manner and intonation. Mrs. Schilizzi's manner at once struck Grenville and touched him. There was in it not only a certain plaintive prettiness, but a humour and a dignity, when she passed these criticisms on herself, which was, in his judgment, quite enough to refute them.

"I never," he said, "saw any one less provincial than you."

"Well," she replied, "I won't argue the point. If ever you were to see more of me, I should have little need to do so."

When their luncheon was over, and they were once more in the carriage, with a frank abruptness she recurred to the same subject. As they drove away, she turned to look at the castle, and said with a slight sigh, "Perhaps

one reason why I feel so *borné* is not that I have seen so few things, but that I long to see many. And yet, after all, inexperience has its advantages. A person who had not seen so little as I have, I am sure could have never enjoyed a day so much."

"You cannot," said Grenville, "have enjoyed it more than I have: though I have enjoyed it for a reason that could never be shared by you."

"What reason?" she asked.

"The reason is," he replied, "that I have had you as a companion."

The moment he had said the words he repented of them. The compliment was obvious, and had slipped from him, out of some forgotten habit; but the effect it had upon her went into his heart like a knife. She gave him first a look of surprise and pleasure, which shamed him by its trust in his sincerity; then came what seemed a reaction of doubt, and a pained resentment. The jolting of the carriage for a time made further speaking impossible. She had turned

away from him ; but for many minutes afterwards he saw, as often as he glanced at her, that a deep flush in her cheek kept coming and going as if her heart were in some hidden tumult. A sudden sense came over him of the nature of the life beside him—of how delicate it was, how easily pleased and wounded ; and he said to himself with an almost disproportionate compunction, which was however wholly without vanity, “Idiot that I am—what little care I take of her—

‘I that would not let e’en the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly.’”

By and by, in a totally changed tone, full of sympathy, but without a suspicion of compliment, he took up the conversation as if nothing had interrupted it. “I can hardly admit,” he said, “that the pleasure you have taken in our expedition, and which, as I told you just now, has so added to mine is due to the mere accident of your not having travelled much. Travel more, as no doubt you will some day, and each new climate you visit will affect you like the sound of some new

musical instrument, or some new human face thrilling you with new sympathies. I wonder if you will catch my meaning. I could explain it to you by my own experiences. The Scottish Highlands, for instance, purple with autumn air; the mountains whose slopes in sunlight are creased with rocky shadows, or which lift themselves through the wet mist on each other's shoulders into the clouds; the wet clouds that come trooping down over the heather; the eyes of the moorland children on the bare hill-path at evening—all this—how shall I put it?—it speaks to the nerves of some one secret of existence. This land of castles and forests says something wholly different. It tantalizes the spirit with different dreams of self-fulfilment. And Italy, again, and the Mediterranean sky—the very thought of these dazzles one with a new and coloured universe—where the gardens glitter with statues, where the ceilings are frescoed with all the gods of Olympus, and where blue evenings are seen through bowers of Banksia roses. Did you ever," he went on, "read the story of

Pyramus, who died at the foot of the mulberry-tree, and whose blood gave its colour to the fruit? All the world's various civilizations, in the same way, give some new hue, as we realize them, to all the flowers of the imagination."

He was not looking at her as he spoke, but he instinctively knew that she was attending to him. He was therefore surprised when, at this point, she hastily murmured, "Don't," and turned her head away from him.

"Why?" he said, "what is it? Tell me—have I been boring you?"

She looked him in the face, and her eyes were tremulous with tears. "You only," she said, "give me longings for what I shall never know."

When he spoke again, it was in a more commonplace tone. "You shouldn't," he said, "take so gloomy a view of your future. You should light it up with the happiest expectations you can, and with as many of these as possible. Expectations are like lamps, which cost nothing to keep burning, and events are able only to blow out one at a time."

After this, there was an end of seriousness and sentiment, and their talk became nothing but the ripple of meeting sympathies, till once again they saw the villas of Lichtenbourg, and agreed that they would dine in the restaurant, keeping each other company.

Between their return and dinner she had completed her arrangements about her rooms; and the prettiness of the salon she had secured, and the comfort of the rooms for her children, filled her with spirits and pleasure, as if they were some new toy. She talked about them to Grenville with an innocent and happy volubility, which secured his interest by taking his interest for granted; and then from her rooms she passed on to her children, telling him of their lessons, their health, their tastes, their characters—moving from subject to subject lightly and tenderly as a butterfly. Grenville listened absorbed, wondering why he did so. It was hardly so much words that he was listening to, as a kind of moral music; and when dinner was over he looked back at it with wonder, reflecting that the convers-



ation, which had made it pass so quickly, had hardly strayed beyond the limits of a stranger's nursery.

Again, in the warm evening, they sat under the lamp-lit trees, listening to the cadence of the band. By this time she was silent. Her eyes and her lips were pensive. "Listen," she murmured, as a gay waltz being ended, the music turned into something that might have been a love-song or a hymn. Touched by the sound, Grenville said to her softly, "How fond you are of your children! Whether you see much of the world or little, you at all events have them."

"Yes," she said, and her words kept time to the music, as if she trusted it half to hide and half to express her emotion, "they are all I have to live for."

Presently, as if feeling that she had betrayed more than she meant to, she turned to him with a smile that was at once bright and languid, and thanking him for the pleasure he had that day been the means of giving her, said she was tired, and must now be going to

rest. "You have been so kind," she added, "I shall always think of you as one of the kindest people I have known."

"And I," he answered, "I shall always think of you——" He paused.

"Yes," she said, "yes. Tell me how will you think of me?" She put the question with an undisguised curiosity; but before he had attempted to answer, she had risen, and with her eyes on the ground, said, "If you think of me at all, I will tell you how to do so. Think of me as some one waiting for something that never comes."

## CHAPTER X.

THE following morning they returned together to the Princess's, but no one who had seen them in the train would ever have thought it possible that two people, so shyly and so civilly distant, had only the day before been so suddenly and so happily intimate. The moment they met again she saw he was a changed man ; and the change in him instantly produced one that answered to it in her. When they talked during the journey it was merely about the most commonplace matters, and for long periods they were both completely silent, she self-wounded by thoughts of what now seemed to her to have been folly ; he, conscious of some cold revulsion of feeling which made the events of yesterday at once a wonder and, an

annoyance to him. He was not inattentive to her ; but she had retreated from him to an indefinite distance ; and she seemed, when they reached the castle, to retreat further still. He found awaiting him a fresh packet of letters, at a few of which he glanced whilst getting ready for dinner. Thoughts of the world, and of success in it, went through his blood like alcohol, and he muttered on his way to the drawing-room, "What an idiot I was yesterday !"

His condition of mind, however, at dinner, and during the evening, expressed itself merely in an access of mundane good-humour. He troubled himself to make conversation, and he made it with some success. He described Lichtenbourg ; he described the castles he had visited ; he laughed at the Pasha's furniture, at his bath, and his bottles of essences ; and he said to the Princess, "The whole time I was there, I was in my own mind trying to construct a picture of him. I felt sure he had waxed moustaches, hair dyed and curly, and eyes that had

fluttered the heart of every ballet-girl in the Cairo opera-house."

The Princess was delighted, and thought he had never been so entertaining before. But as for Mrs. Schilizzi, she listened to him half bewildered, wondering if this could really be her late sympathetic companion. There was nothing in what he said that was actually hard or ill-natured ; but through it all ran a vein of contemptuous flippancy, which made him seem to her quite a different person ; and a little later, though from quite a different cause, he became in her eyes removed from her yet further. In a changed tone he mentioned to the Princess that he had heard that evening from two English statesmen, Lord B—— and Mr. W——. The Princess in former days had known both of them well, and she began to discuss their characters with him, and exchange stories about them ; and from them they passed on to other public characters. Mrs. Schilizzi listened to what was said, as if it were a sound from some inaccessible world, to whose inhabitants she

herself meant nothing. Till they separated for the night, she hardly again addressed him ; but then, as she turned to go, a part of what was in her mind expressed itself.

“ I ought,” she said, “ to thank you again for that beautiful expedition of yesterday ; but don’t ”—and her lips as well as her voice trembled—“ don’t laugh at me for all the nonsense I talked to you. How could I have done so ? I can hardly bear to think of it.”

“ Laugh at you ! ” he exclaimed. “ My dear Mrs. Schilizzi, if your conversation were the kind of thing to be laughed at, I only wish I had friends who would make me laugh oftener.”

His voice was full of a careless but genial frankness which certainly showed her that her specific request was unnecessary ; but he wounded her more than he would have done had he been less prompt in his assurance, because he showed so little comprehension of the doubts he dispelled so carelessly. When she reached her room, she sank into a chair before the looking-glass, and sat abstractedly

staring at her own reflection. At last she was startled at seeing tears gathering in her eyes. She rose abruptly, and hid her face in her pillow. "Never, never, never," she murmured, sobbing, "never again will I show my thoughts to any one. The moment I do so, something or other nips them, and they lie on my mind like so many withered daisies." The image of Grenville had no part in her trouble, except as a far-off figure which pointed to her own loneliness ; and by and by, when she sank into a weary sleep, there was still a line of pain on her upturned childish forehead, and a tear had trickled and lost itself in the frills round her slim throat.

Grenville meanwhile was in a very different mood. He was seated at his writing-table, with all the air of a man who has work before him of an anxious and urgent kind ; and a certain letter was absorbing his whole attention. It came from his man of business, and its purport was not agreeable. It told him that his aunt, his nearest living relative, who depended for the decencies, if not for the



necessaries, of her life, on the few hundreds a year which he allowed her out of his limited income, had brought herself, by a foolish speculation, to temporary but extreme distress. Without understanding the real extent of her liability, she had bought a number of shares, not fully paid, in a mine; and circumstances having suddenly rendered another call necessary, the payment of this, which was demanded under threat of legal proceedings, had been made by her in fear and trembling, and had left her for the time penniless. "Unwilling," the writer continued, "to apply for help to you, who have done, and who do, so much for her, she hoped by selling a little plate, and by practising various economies, to be able to get through the crisis without your hearing of its occurrence; but you will see from the details, which I enter on a separate sheet, that this was quite impossible. When I last saw her—she has consulted me several times—I found that she had discharged all but one of her servants. It was a chilly day, and there was hardly any fire in her grate. She was looking

at a few old miniatures, and wondering if she could sell them; and I noticed that her hands were trembling not with agitation only, but with cold. For her immediate wants, I advanced her a small sum myself. But to relieve her effectually, about two hundred and fifty pounds will be required; and reluctant as I am to appeal to you in the matter, I feel I am bound to do so, though I do so without her knowledge."

Grenville laid the letter down with a frown of annoyed perplexity. "Two hundred and fifty pounds," he said to himself; "I doubt if I have as much as that at my banker's." He meditated. "Damn that doctor," he exclaimed, "if he hadn't robbed me, I could have managed it." Then his mind changed. "Poor devil," he thought, "I caught sight of him as I drove away from Lichtenbourg. How much better he looked! I was glad to think of what I had done for him. He had one of his children with him—a little girl; and he was smiling at her. I like the man, and good luck to him!" He now smiled

himself, but at a new train of reflections. "Here am I," he thought, "fancying myself a great man; flattered by ambassadors, bowed down to by officials; received by hotel-keepers as some wonderful *grand seigneur*, and comporting myself as if nothing and nobody were good enough for me; and yet if I write a cheque for a paltry sum like this, I shall hardly have money enough left to carry me back to England. What an amusing contrast between my apparent position and my real one! All the fine fortunes I have fancied myself already possessed of, are no more help to me now than the sight of land to a swimmer who will probably—and this may be my own case—drown before he reaches it. Anyhow, let me know the worst."

He turned to his banker's book; and half flinching as he did so, began to examine his account.

"It is worse than I thought," he said. "I have barely a hundred left. Up to three hundred, no doubt, I could overdraw; but supposing I pay this money, how shall I stand

myself?" For the least selfish of men it would have been a very natural question ; but even before he had answered it, he considered one point as settled—and that was his payment of the whole sum required. The economies that would be necessary on his own part he now proceeded to calculate ; and he soon decided, although with extreme reluctance, that he would have to cut short his travels, and at once return to London.

Quickly as his decision was taken, it was taken with a pang of disappointment, which he bore in the best way possible by refusing to think how keen it was. With a nervous haste he passed to his other letters, as if he counted on finding in them some help to distraction. He began with the two which he had glanced at before dinner : and if he sought distraction, they were unexpectedly successful in bringing it to him. One was from no less a person than the Prime Minister himself, and contained a compliment which he had never expected from that quarter—a request for his opinion on certain important matters, which

would form the subject of an impending debate in Parliament. The other was from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which was even more encouraging. "I cannot," it said, "too highly praise you for the extreme lucidity of your last communication—especially those parts of it in which you work out your suggestions with regard to the claims of the Turkish and Egyptian bondholders. I believe that with you, and with you alone, will be the credit of showing us our way out of an extremely troublesome difficulty. I may tell you that Lord Solway—by the by, is he a relation of yours?—who is an authority of considerable weight on most of our Eastern questions, was asking me about you only two nights ago; and I said to him just what I have said to yourself now. His answer was, 'Then by G— he has done more for the Government than if he had won a dozen contested seats.'"

Grenville now turned to an envelope which he had not yet opened, and which in one corner bore the signature "Solway." Its contents were as follows:—

“MY DEAR MR. GRENVILLE,—If only your grandfather, whom I remember well — and charming he was too, with a charm that exists no longer—had not been a person of such nice social taste, and had appreciated less keenly the privilege of consorting with ‘the First Gentleman in Europe,’ you would yourself be in a position to aspire, without arrogance, to the hand of any young lady, no matter how distinguished, provided that her father was not a king or a nobody. But as matters stand, there is hardly a mother in England—I refer to mothers of daughters in any way suitable to yourself—who would not object to you in the character of a son-in-law quite as openly as she would value you in the character of a friend and guest. You are indeed an excellent example of the way, so much admired by the pious, in which Providence visits on the children the sins and extravagances of fathers. As you are not, however, a Nonconformist minister, you will I trust not be shocked at me when I tell you my own conviction, that half our duty to Providence

consists in dishing it, and, if we cannot get rid of errors, at least getting rid of their consequences. I propose, therefore, if you will allow me, to assist in dishing Providence, so far as regards yourself. I know by this time quite enough of what there is in you, to be satisfied that you have before you a brilliant and serviceable career; and I will impute your success to you before you have actually achieved it. Why should you waste any longer time in waiting? If you can manage to do so, you may propose to my niece to-morrow. I don't advise you to do that exactly, for it would have to be done by telegraph; but at all events use whatever expedition you can: and I will tell you how, without the telegraph, you can be quite as expeditious as is necessary. My sister and her two daughters are just starting for Italy. They are going to Milan, Padua, Vicenza, and at last to Venice. I will send you to-morrow an exact calendar of their movements; and then, my advice is, join them. And now, by way of saying something specially pleasant at



parting, I may as well tell you this. Evelyn's cousin—young Oliver Jackson—a good-looking boy, but to my mind a monstrous prig, has excited her admiration by the degree he has taken at Oxford, and—people think I'm blind, but I see as much as the best of them—has been lending her books, which she takes and reads with gratitude. There's nothing in this thus far. It's all very silly and natural; but none the less you must remember, as Byron said from experience, 'There is a tide in the affairs of women.' And if you don't know that by this time, I needn't attempt to teach it to you."

As Grenville read this, something that was not trouble exactly, but excitement mixed with anxiety, not only took possession of his face, but also expressed itself in his movements. He rose from his seat, paced the room restlessly, smoked some cigarettes in order to calm his nerves, and finally, with an impatient rapidity, undressed himself and went to bed.

Early next morning he sent a note to the Princess, to tell her he was wanted in England,

and must start that afternoon for Vienna. She was sincerely annoyed at this, and when she met him at luncheon, she was armed with a piece of news which made her regret stronger. She put into his hand a picture she had just received from the agent—a picture of a castle on the summit of a wooded rock. “Could you only have stayed,” she said, “you might easily have seen that. It is said to be by far the most curious place in the country.” The moment he looked at it, it struck him as being familiar; and he presently recognized it as the castle which he had seen, with such wonder, from the railway. He eyed the picture wistfully, and a strong wish came over him not to quit these regions of yet unexhausted dreams. He passed it to Mrs. Schilizzi, who took it with a distant smile. When she examined it, she softly exclaimed, “How curious!” That was her only comment, but she kept it beside her plate, and throughout the meal her eyes were continually turning to it.

As for Grenville, whatever his regrets were, they did not interfere with the decision and

promptness of his movements. There was a train for Vienna at five in the afternoon, going by the direct route, and arriving early in the morning: and by it he had arranged to take his departure. The station for this was seven or eight miles distant; so his hours with his friends were already almost numbered. "I suppose," he said to the Princess, "if my business is done quickly, you will let me come back and finish my explorations?"

"Do," she said, brightening up at the idea. "You must remember I feel you are treating me very badly. However, I'll come to the door with you, and give you a parting kick."

Mrs. Schilizzi came too, with her pair of fair-eyed children, and watched with a quiet face the carriage disappear from the archway.

## CHAPTER XI.

EXCITED as Grenville was by the future that was now dazzling him, he could not help reflecting, for the first mile or so of his drive, on another drive he had taken only two days ago, when he had had a companion by his side, and had seemed to be drifting into fairy-land. But he soon got rid of this not very violent sentiment, and turned his thoughts to his own situation and prospects. His immediate financial difficulties he viewed with diminished anxiety; and though a journey to Italy would be a new strain on his resources, he felt confident he should manage to meet it somehow. But one thought which had been forced on him last night had become more startling and more persistent than ever; and

this was the thought of the extreme weakness and insecurity of his own position in the world, as it actually was at present. Another such claim as that which he was now about to meet would reduce him to penury. A fall of five shillings in the rent of each of his acres would reduce him to ruin yet more complete and hopeless. Nothing but his wits would be left him between himself and starvation. Many people, he reflected, considered him as a social light. He seemed to himself but a small flickering taper, which the slightest breath might at any moment extinguish.

He allowed his mind to dwell upon, and even exaggerate, facts like these, in order to add to the value of the release from them that was being now made so easy for him ; and without intentionally constructing any picture of his future, details of it unbidden thrust themselves in upon his consciousness. He saw his name in half the papers of Europe. In various capitals, and at Vienna especially, he saw himself the object of peculiar social consideration. In London his lodgings, and his one

man-servant, gave place to a large and decorous house and household. He saw a star in his coat, and a phantom ribbon across his breast. From time to time also he saw at his side a wife. Now her happy eyes were making a light in his solitude ; now he and she were being announced at some brilliant party. And yet all these images, somehow, to his own surprise, pleasing as they were, did but excite him moderately.

“ I wonder,” he thought, as he found himself alone in the railway-carriage, “ if from everything in life that we desire, the best part of its charm takes flight as we approach it, or becomes invisible, like a rainbow. Perhaps the truth is, that even the best of good things find the mind hardly prepared for them, if they are too brusquely thrust on one.”

Thus reflecting, he took from his bag some photographs, and began meditatively to look at them. One was a portrait of a girl—the same which a few days since he had turned to and apostrophized in his bedroom at the Princess’s castle. The others were views,



amongst them being those of the house which had roused the admiration of the lover, on the journey from Paris to Vienna. This house and its surrounding landscape were both evidently beautiful; though a broken bridge and a half-roofless boat-house, even in the photograph, betrayed poverty and neglect. The house itself too, to the eyes of Grenville, who was its owner, told the same story. Certain sinkings of the roof, certain S-shaped iron ties visible on the walls, meant for him that it was fast falling to pieces; that the present tenants would soon find it uninhabitable; whilst years of his present income would not suffice to repair it. But so far as beauty went, it was still perfect: it might even be called magnificent; and his eyes rested on every detail lingeringly. There it stood with its lines of mullioned windows, with its twisted pillars and chimney-stacks, with its domed turrets, and its vanes, facing the present with a forlorn, pathetic dignity. But this was far from being to him its sole suggestion. It brought back to him his own early days, and



the growing embarrassments of his family. He remembered the straitened life that was masked by those stately walls—the few servants, the wilderness of unused rooms, the meagre fare, the one horse in the stables. He remembered his discovering, and his boyish inability to believe it, that his people used, in the county, to be talked of as “those poor Grenvilles.” He remembered how the wife of a stockbroker who had intrigued herself into London society, and had taken a place in the neighbourhood with some of the best shooting in England, had brought to a county ball an omnibus-load of lords and ladies, and on the strength of her diamonds and her company had presumed to be supercilious to his mother. Memory after memory of the same kind came back to him, each with the sting in it of some humiliating circumstance. Then from the views of his own house he turned to one of another. This was a plain structure, with a centre and two wings, all whitewash and windows, except for an entrance portico. It was bald and hideous, and of no exceptional size ;

but even the photograph showed that it was kept in perfect order ; and its hideousness, as every detail of it proclaimed, was at least made respectable by having lasted a hundred years. "And so," thought Grenville, "that is to be my wife's dowry, given her with the special purpose of saving her husband's fortunes, and calling life back to those old walls that are dying. It will be quite sufficient, if only we take our time ; and I can solace my pride with this reflection at all events—that if the two properties are united, I shall not only have saved my own, but have given to my wife something that is worth saving."

He replaced the pictures in the case from which he had taken them ; and leaning back, he began, with a gathering frown, to see certain facts facing him, which were not quite satisfactory. These had reference to his position with regard to the lady whom he had, in his thoughts about the future, been so confidently regarding as his wife. He felt that now, suddenly and for the first time, he realized all that depended on her actually and immediately

becoming so ; and an event which he had assumed as certain, when looked on as indefinitely distant, began to seem painfully doubtful, when abruptly brought so close to him.

He set himself to reconsider what grounds he had for his confidence. They were not perhaps of the strongest ; but still they were not so slight as a third party might be apt to think from a statement of them. When Grenville first met, grown up and developed, the Lady Evelyn Standish, whom he had known familiarly in his childhood, he had divined almost instantly a number of minute things which, as a woman, distinctly marked her character. She was not a woman by whom the majority of men would be attracted, or any man for mere purposes of amusement ; nor would men in general, as men, have much attraction for her. He saw all this in her eyes, almost as soon as he looked at them. Frank and friendly as they were, they would never expand or soften, except under the influence of a feeling which, though she might not understand it, sprang from the very

depths of her life, and would not be excited readily. His instinct taught him thus much ; but it did not teach him one thing, which before very long his surprised observation did ; and this was that a feeling of precisely the kind in question had, if signs meant anything, been excited in her by himself. What made him confident that his observation did not deceive him, was no vanity on his part, but his complete belief in her genuineness : and in thinking of what had happened, he was touched rather than flattered. He had, as he confessed in his diary, soon begun to experience a strong inclination to develop and return her feeling ; but until he had explained himself to her guardian he had simply kept this in check ; and after the explanation his part had become a delicate one. Unauthorized as yet to make to her any distinct advances, fearful of trifling with her affection, and equally fearful of chilling it, he had endeavoured to maintain with her a kind of balanced relationship, which might either be warmed into love or allowed to fade

into friendship. The virtual request indeed which his conduct had to convey, and to convey in such a way that she should feel rather than know its meaning, was simply this, if put into vulgar language—"Give me the refusal of you till I see if I can make you an offer."

Everything however, in such cases, depends for its ease or difficulty on the precise characters and temperaments of the two persons concerned; and Grenville felt that the character and the temperament of Lady Evelyn made a situation almost simple, which many women would have made impossible. He believed her inclination for himself to be quite sufficiently deep to obviate, for a time at all events, any danger of a rival; and yet to be so placid that, should such a fate be in store for it, it would die of a gradual decline, without serious pain. He had had, therefore, up to the present juncture, very good if not very apparent reasons, for trusting that, as soon as he could ask her, she would be his for the trouble of asking; though it must be

admitted that his trust owed part of its tranquillity to the fact that passion had here hardly been strong enough to amuse itself with inflicting on him its customary doubts as to its object. But now, though passion had nothing to do with the change, his tranquillity began to be disturbed, and to give place to anxiety. The more he thought on the subject as the train went rumbling on, the more did this anxiety grow on him ; and it filled him at last with a fever of impatient longing to be face to face with the lady without a day's unnecessary delay, and to be taking steps to dispose of his doubts for ever.

Morning was gray on the dewy pavements of Vienna as he drove to the Hôtel Impérial. Could he have done so, he would have gone at once to the Embassy, to see if Lord Solway's promised letter had arrived. Exhaustion however gave him enough philosophy to submit to the comforts of sleep and a spring mattress ; and before he was up the expected letter was brought to him. It was short, and much to the point. " My sister

and her daughters," said Lord Solway, "leave for Paris to-night, and will arrive at Vicenza—you will be good enough to pay attention to dates—three days from now. They will remain there for the inside of a week, as they are going to try to get for me some chimney-pieces and doors in a certain dismantled palace. I saw them two years ago, but the price asked was exorbitant, and I had no time to bargain. My sister is going to attempt doing so for me; and I told her this—that I had asked you, as I knew you were coming that way, to join her if possible, and help her in her negotiations. This should reach you in time to give you one day's grace for preparations; but if you are to catch them, you must be off the morning after. I enclose you a photograph of young Oliver Jackson, with his spectacles in one hand, and Aristotle's *Ethics* in the other. If you like the look of him, you may perhaps meet him at Venice. He will not be at Vicenza. You will admit, I think, that I have made matters pretty smooth for you."



No news, except perhaps the last item, could in itself have been more welcome to Grenville. He had however by no means calculated on being driven to such instant action. His settled intentions had been to go first to London, and do what he could in assisting his poor old helpless relation, pictures of whose distress had been constantly presenting themselves to his mind. And now it perversely happened that if he should do this, his own golden opportunity would be lost. Suddenly he saw a way—a simple way—out of the difficulty. Springing out of bed he wrote a note to his bankers, to tell them that he might have presently to overdraw his account, which, as on a former occasion, they doubtless would let him do. He then drew a cheque for a hundred pounds, and enclosed it to his man of business, for his aunt's immediate relief, promising if possible to be in London the following week, and in any case to provide such further sums as might be necessary.

With Lord Solway's letter another had

arrived from the Embassy—a line written by the Ambassadress, begging him to come to luncheon. His own plans being as far as possible settled, he longed for distraction, and accepted the invitation gladly. It seemed that Vienna still must be full of English, for he found his hostess surrounded by a party of London acquaintances. Most of them were ladies; and to judge from their conversation, they had brought their own newest gossip with them, along with their jewels and their dresses.

“My dear,” one of them was saying to the Ambassadress, “there’s no holding Theresa since she’s got her new tiara; though who gave it her—there of course is the mystery.”

“Tell me,” said the Ambassadress, “about Lady ——’s ball. She’s grown so smart, I hear, that she won’t ask her own daughters. Lucy, were you there?”

“No, my dear—I’m not smart.”

“A woman,” said an old dandy with a face cut like a cameo, and a delicate hesitation in his voice; “a woman like Lady ——, when

she gives a ball like this, takes a great deal more pleasure in thinking of the people she hasn't invited, than of the people she has."

The sound of all this was familiar enough to Grenville, and not long since he would have been amused by it; but now it came to him like a sound heard in a dream. It was flat and unreal in a way he could not account for. He did indeed by an effort laugh and talk as usual; but nothing roused in him any real interest, till he heard of the latest romance, and the latest scandal of Vienna; and this was the infatuation of the ex-King of Moldavia for a young unmarried girl—the new beauty of the season, who had shocked society by the audacity with which she had encouraged him, and who proved to be none other than Miss Juanita Markham. Amongst the company were two of the most amusing women in London. But he only wondered now how he could ever have been entertained by either. For a moment indeed he thought better of them, when they began to talk about

Hungary; but he presently found this topic less inspiring than any, because it made him long to be back again in the scenes he had just quitted.

Returning to his hotel, discontented he knew not why, he learnt from Fritz, who had been devoting himself to a study of timetables, that the journey to Vicenza would occupy thirty hours, and that if he wished to arrive there on the day specified, the best thing he could do would be to start by the express that evening. He hailed the intelligence with delight. He felt that were he only moving again—moving to the event on which his future depended, and to the woman who he hoped would share it, his discontent would vanish and the colours of life grow bright again.

He found that experience hardly fulfilled his anticipations; but how his condition was affected by what took place at Vicenza will be best described hereafter in his own words. It will be enough for the present to say that, having remained there several days, he had

left under circumstances which, to judge from his face and bearing, had not indeed elated him, or freed him from all anxiety, but had still afforded him some grounds for satisfaction; and he had, with no companion excepting his faithful servant, indulged himself in the pleasure of visiting some places of interest in the district. One morning he had risen very early, so as to make an expedition to a villa built by Palladio, sequestered in the country, and far from the nearest town. He was standing in its pale colonnade, which, from the side of a low hill, overlooked the sea-like Venetian plain. There was still a rawness in the air, and a mist that smelt of fields and damp vineyards, and that touched his forehead and stirred his thoughts refreshingly. He thought of that first drive of his, the morning after he had reached Lichtenbourg. He had just been through the principal range of rooms. The stuccoed exterior of the building, and the ragged grass-plat in front of it, had disappointed him; but the moment he entered,

disappointment had been lost in wonder. Every foot of wall and ceiling, in each smallest ante-chamber no less than in the largest hall, was covered with gorgeous frescoes—the work of Paul Veronese. The shining floors reflected antique Venetian furniture. Furniture and frescoes alike were perfect, and untouched by time. As Grenville stood, gazing at the distant levels, out of which here and there rose a tall solitary campanile, he suddenly ejaculated, “What a fool I am! I declare that never occurred to me. Fritz,” he shouted, “come here. I want to speak to you. You know in my rooms in London the picture—that by Paul Veronese—that hangs usually above the side-board. Was that left on the wall, or was it locked up in the cupboard where I keep my papers?” Fritz replied, as if owning to some negligence, that it was left on the wall; but no reproof was inflicted on him. On the contrary, his master muttered to himself with complacency, “That then settles everything. A dealer has twice offered me five hundred

pounds for it. Before a week is over he shall have lodged that sum at my banker's. I can settle my business without going back to London. And now—now—at least for another month, wherever my wishes draw me, I am free to follow them."

END OF VOLUME I.



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